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WRATH OF THE ANCIENTS

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WRATH OF THE ANCIENTS

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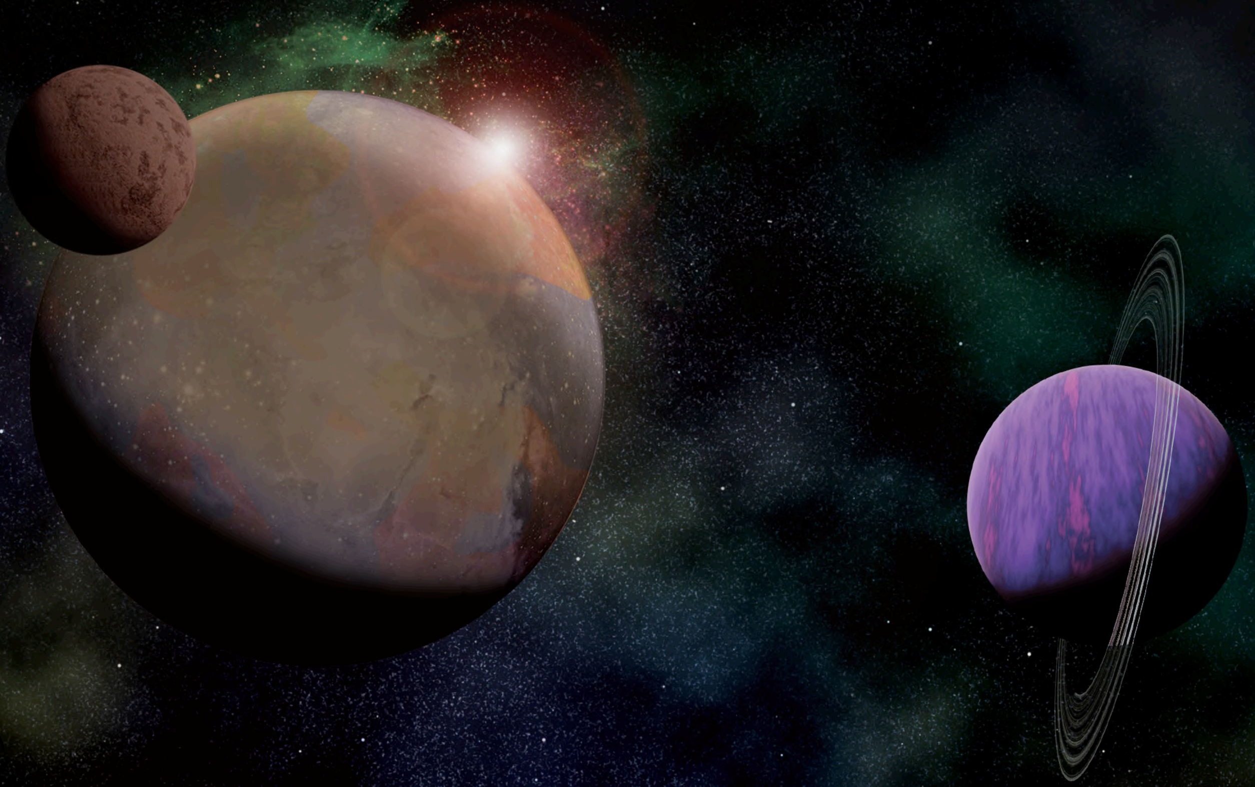


INTRODUCTION

Wrath of the Ancients is the third and final campaign in the series that began with *Mysteries of the Ancients* and continued in *Secrets of the Ancients*. Each is a complete campaign which link together to create a mega-campaign. The Travellers began as relatively normal people drawn into the weird world of the Ancients Hunters by an old contact who needed their help. Ever since, the rabbit hole has just kept getting deeper. Much of what they thought they knew about the universe was wrong, they discovered, but more importantly they came to realise that what they knew – right or wrong – was very little at all.

The Travellers' search for their friend led them to Callia, where they confronted a living weapon referred to as G482. Proceeding to the doomed planet of Calefaction, the Travellers barely escaped its destruction. Along the way they came into possession of an original manuscript, a truly execrable saga-poem thought by many Ancients Hunters to contain clues about a functioning Ancients base. This was the legendary Twilight's Peak, written a century earlier and based – albeit rather loosely – on the author's own experiences.

Taking a clue from the book, the Travellers made their way to Lydia, where they found and entered a mysterious mountain. They were not alone; a band of Droyne led by Yusote had arrived before them and the Imperium's Omicron Division was close behind. What none of them suspected was that others were concealed in the base; servants of the Ancient Tsyamoykyo. Fighting broke out, whilst the base came under external attack.

With Twilight's Peak about to become a glowing crater, the Travellers made their escape. They took with them only what they could carry, or so they thought. Some might have already suspected that something had happened to them inside Twilight' Peak. They were changing, although little was yet apparent about how and what the end result might be. In fact, the Travellers had been subjected to an experimental uplift programme which in time would elevate them far above the level of their species.

Soon after the destruction of Twilight's Peak the Travellers were contacted in regard to the death of Vlen Beckett, who they had encountered earlier in their adventures. He had left them an inheritance and also a task. That led to further entanglements with the Ancients, as Vlen was not only still alive – or rather, not dead – but he was a servant of an Ancient named Seven.

Seven had learned of the re-emergence of the first and greatest of the Ancients; Yaskoydray, and intended to kill him. This was quite an undertaking, as Yaskoydray could download backup copies of himself to a new body unless his archive was destroyed. The Travellers' adventures took them on a psionic journey into the distant past, where they learned of the development of the Ancients' servitors – Droyne, humans and Vargr. They finally voyaged beyond the Imperium, to a hidden base where a confrontation took place between Yaskoydray and Seven.

The Travellers participated in the battle and may have influenced its outcomes. At the end of *Secrets of the Ancients*, the Travellers were able to choose what to do next. However, events are about to take an apocalyptic turn. There are three general possibilities: Yaskoydray dead and Seven alive, Seven dead and Yaskoydray alive, or both dead.

Both dead: As far as the Travellers are aware the Ancients' Final War is over. They have witnessed a titanic battle and looted the remains of the Ancients base. The Travellers are free agents with great power.

Yaskoydray dead and Seven alive: Seven might well just ignore the Travellers. He has big plans and they are not a threat to him at this time; the Travellers are free agents but Seven is aware of them. Alternatively, they may be offered the chance to serve Seven. If so, he sends them on a few trivial missions whilst he rebuilds his power. The uplift package mentioned in *Secrets of the Ancients* has not yet been delivered to the Travellers, and will not be.

Seven dead and Yaskoydray alive: It is quite possible that Yaskoydray might simply ignore the Travellers once they have helped him survive and not even reward them. If so, they are free agents and Yaskoydray is out there somewhere doing something or other. If Yaskoydray did reward the Travellers, they have a lot of goodies but Yaskoydray disappears quickly once the battle with Seven is over. The Travellers are, again, free agents.

The finale of *Secrets of the Ancients* is set up to be the end of a campaign, as it was initially written as a standalone book. It is now necessary to draw the possible threads back in so *Wrath of the Ancients* can have a coherent starting point. The starting point is this: Yaskoydray and Seven are dead or otherwise out of the picture and the Travellers are free agents.

REFEREE'S OVERVIEW

Wrath of the Ancients is a big story and by the end of it the Travellers will be a force to shake the cosmos. The story begins some time after the Travellers have taken part in the battle between Yaskoydray and Seven. If they are working for Seven he suddenly goes silent. As they investigate, the Travellers become aware of great events unfolding in Imperial space. Something has attacked the Droyne world of Andor, devastating the planet and the Imperial interdiction flotilla. A rural population of what appear to be ordinary Droyne have been massacred for unknown reasons.

The Travellers learn that these Droyne were in fact very special. They had been hidden in plain sight on Andor by Yaskoydray, with only those caring for them given any indication of why. This population is being selectively bred for the 'god gene' that produced Yaskoydray. They are at once a research project and a source of backup genetic material if his constant cloning of himself begins to go awry. Some have been carried off by the attackers and the rest slaughtered. However, there might be a few survivors. These were taken to Imperial Research Station Gamma, at Vanejen. There, the Travellers find the place in a shambles and the head researcher conducting unethical experiments on sentient beings. They learn the truth about the special Droyne and why they were killed. They also discover information on the uplift process begun on them at Twilight's Peak. This leads to discoveries about Omicron Division, Mad Captain Maddox and the hidden Oytrip that attacked Twilight's Peak. Journeying there, the Travellers discover the remains of the Omicron Division fleet and the Oytrip's forces, and find a quisling traitor ruling what remains of the Oytrip. He is building weapons and creating monsters there.

Seeking allies to counter Tsyamoykyo's plan, the Travellers are drawn into the nightmare world aboard Captain Maddox' ship. Presumed lost in 1019, the vessel was caught in the backlash of a temporal weapon fired during the battle over Yusote's homeworld. The Travellers are able to penetrate the field and rescue the ship, gaining an ally in their fight.

The battle for the Oytrip is hard but victory holds the key to entering Tsyamoykyo's lair and confronting him. Finally, the Travellers stand amid the wreckage of Tsyamoykyo's base, holding in their hands the possibility of removing all Ancients from existence. Will they kill the gods or let them live? Will they become what they have overthrown? This might be the biggest choice ever made in the Charted Space universe.

THE SECOND COMING

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

TONE OF THE CAMPAIGN

Wrath of the Ancients is very much a cinematic campaign, played at the superhero level rather than being about a bunch of talented but more or less ordinary people. The Travellers' perspective might already have changed but if not it is likely to during this campaign. They will still need resources but raking around an adventure site for absolutely everything that can be sold for more than Cr9 is not really what this campaign is about. Such behaviour is rather petty for people with such power… but if they want to do that the Travellers are welcome to.

However, it is likely that the Travellers will come to realise they are now well above the level of merely talented people. What would have been a life-threatening ambush becomes an inconvenience or even an opportunity to show off their powers. How they deal with people will say a lot about the Travellers and what kind of super-beings they will become. Some Travellers may prefer to remain unnoticed, patiently filling out the paperwork instead of turning the supply clerk inside-out and taking what they want. Others will enjoy lording it over others or revealing their nature to surprise those who have not treated them appropriately. There are many approaches to demigodhood and the Travellers might want to explore different ones.

Some elements of the campaign take place in what might be termed psionic nightmares. For an ordinary person these would indeed be nightmares, in which things happen without them being able to exert any control. For the Travellers, these can become lucid dreams in which they take control over a malleable situation. What they experience may vary between Travellers. Since what they see and experience is psionically triggered in their own brain it will usually be interpreted through their own experiences and preconceptions. For example, if a telepathically induced 'dream' of a crisis situation is sent at a group of Travellers each will experience it according to their nature. A career spacer may interpret the crisis as a leaking vacc suit whilst an office worker might be getting chewed out by the personnel manager.

There are other options. The Referee might make references to previous adventures, perhaps distorted or with the dangers enhanced. *Classic Traveller* adventures might be a good source for situations the Travellers experience, or adventures from other games. They are entering a strange world in which threats and attacks take on forms conjured from their own imagination but are real nonetheless. This might at times be strange or even wacky without altering the overall tone of the campaign if it is handled well. The embarrassment of one Traveller, who was pelted with snails by cartoon mice whilst a colleague had to deal with a genocidal robot uprising, can provide light relief in a campaign that might otherwise get very dark indeed.

SECRETS OF THE ANCIENTS

The average person in Charted Space is aware of the concept that there were 'Ancients' who built a civilisation long before the present species emerged onto the cosmic stage. Beyond that, the level of knowledge possessed by individuals varies enormously – as does the percentage of it which is true. Nobody knows everything about the Ancients, although there are plenty of people who will say they do. Popular knowledge is distorted by the claims of self-proclaimed Ancients experts and by portrayals in fiction.

The Travellers will by now know more about the Ancients than almost anyone else and they will know a few things that nobody else does. After all, they have interacted directly with two of the Ancients – a claim few can ever have made. However, there is much the Travellers do not yet know, including the truth of the Ancients' origins and the location of their homeworld. The Droyne call it Eskayloyt, which is usually translated in Galanglic as 'lost home'.

There are many reasons to suspect that the people who became the Ancients evolved on Andor, in the Spinward Marches. This is correct but it is not the whole story. The people of Andor might be described as proto-Droyne. They possessed an ultra-recessive gene which, once in a great many generations, could produce a being vastly more intelligent than the norm. The being that emerged is known to history as Yaskoydray, or Grandfather.

Anyone from the Charted Space of today would recognise Yaskoydray as a Droyne but they would be only partially correct. Yaskoydray and the clones he made of himself possessed what might be termed a 'god gene', as do all Droyne. However, Yaskoydray was the once-in-forever emergence of what that gene could produce. No other example has ever appeared naturally. Only in Yaskoydray's clones did the gene manifest its effects.

Yaskoydray was curious and investigated everything. He soon learned how to make himself immortal and cloning himself to create assistants was a trivial matter for such a mind. He created 20 clones and from each of them 20 more. Yaskoydray and his offspring led the Droyne and other servitor species in the creation of wonders and when they disobeyed he punished them. Grandfather was an uncaring god, pursuing his own agenda at the expense of all else. His servitors could do nothing about this. When they obeyed they were rewarded with advanced technology and a comfortable lifestyle but their lives meant nothing to their overlords. Yaskoydray and his offspring were not cruel for the sake of it but they saw lesser species as nothing more than tools to be used.

This was the reality of the Ancients; a group of super-beings and a much greater number of servitors. Some of the servitors rose high enough to be considered Ancients by modern historians but even they depended on Yaskoydray and his offspring to maintain their status. Inevitably, some of those offspring began to want independence. Some rebelled, some disobeyed, some failed to meet Yaskoydray's expectations. He finally demanded all of them assist him with a huge project, and when only some responded he resorted to his usual solution: total destruction.

Yaskoydray's problem was that his offspring used the same method of maintaining immortality he did; an archive with backups of his personality and intellect that could be downloaded to a new body in the event of death. It was not enough to destroy his offspring; he would have to eradicate them. If he failed, Yaskoydray would have to fight them over and over again. He had no doubts about success but it would be inconvenient.

Yaskoydray's instrument was Tsyamoykyo, the most insignificant of his offspring. Where others had blossomed into beings only slightly inferior to Yaskoydray himself, Tsyamoykyo seemed to lack ambition and talent – at least by the standards of the Ancients. Instead of pushing his own agenda and pursuing his own interests like a headstrong young god should, Tsyamoykyo had become little more than a servitor to the other Ancients. On one hand this disgusted Yaskoydray but at the same time it was useful. Tsyamoykyo could come and go virtually unnoticed and at times visited the strongholds of other Ancients. They would hardly suspect someone they had ordered to attend upon them might want access to their fortresses.

The devices Tsyamoykyo was ordered to create were delivered to his siblings but they had been subtly modified at Yaskoydray's behest. The siblings did not know Yaskoydray plotted against them and Yaskoydray never suspected that Tsyamoykyo hoped to destroy him along with all the others. When he judged the time was right, Yaskoydray made his opening move. Some of the Ancients were immediately eliminated and their resources co-opted. Others were given the chance to side with Yaskoydray and accept subjugation. Some accepted, hoping to be spared.

Thus began the Ancients' Final War. Not all of the siblings took part at first. Some hoped to remain neutral or outside the conflict if they offered no threat. Yaskoydray would have none of that; it was subjugation or death. So the forces ranged against him mounted even as he slew his offspring. Servitor species rebelled and were swiftly crushed, and the Ancients who had sided with Yaskoydray gradually realised they had no alternative but to fight their sire or flee.

The war was fought to exhaustion and beyond. Resources were used up or made unavailable for a time and Yaskoydray was weakened to the point where the few surviving Ancients could resist his assaults or hide from him. At this point the conflict changed form. It appeared to end, in the sense that no more stars exploded or planetary populations were massacred. In reality the surviving Ancients carried on the fight on a smaller scale. Psionic raids, manipulation of potential servitor species and the very occasional direct assault on a stronghold went on for thousands of years.

By this time Yaskoydray was thoroughly bored of the whole business and concentrated on other areas of endeavour. His agents sought out those of the enemy and eliminated them, whilst long-term projects were implemented which would support his endeavours when he chose to return to Charted Space. In the meantime Yaskoydray hid in his pocket universe and conducted research into whatever interested him at the time. Some of his offspring continued the war, struggling against one another as often as against Yaskoydray. Others believed the conflict had died down and went back to their own projects.

The Droyne suffered terribly during this era. Somehow deprived of their ability to caste, they were doomed to be no more than Chirpers. This displeased Yaskoydray, as he had found the Droyne to be the least displeasing of his servitors. He voyaged out of his pocket universe, teaching scattered communities of Droyne to caste by a new method and introducing rituals that would prepare them for the day when he once again wanted their services. Primitives were no use to him; he needed people capable of using high technology and performing meaningful labour. This done, Yaskoydray returned to his home.

The Ancients' Final War was being fought in the alleys and dingy starport bars of Charted Space. It was fought with knife and poison but just as viciously as before. Those surviving Ancients who had not fled or retreated permanently into their own pocket universes sought to gather resources to tip the balance. That meant gaining control over local populations and guiding them in the right direction. The weaponry and starships they could build were crude and ineffective compared to the wondrous weapons of the Ancients but there were many of them. Quantity would have to replace quality, at least for now.

One of the survivors had bigger plans and a wider perspective. This was Tsyamoykyo, formerly the least of the Ancients. Treated no better than a mere Droyne or human servitor, he had been summoned to the fortresses of his siblings and haughtily given menial tasks. Forced to obey, Tsyamoykyo watched and plotted his revenge. Each of the siblings tended to think in a set way. They were brilliant, supergeniuses by human standards but Yaskoydray had conditioned each to have a particular mindset. He wanted focused supporters, not rival generalists. Contact between the offspring was very limited, reducing exposure to different ways of thinking and they took no notice of ideas put forward by their servitors.

Tsyamoykyo was different. He had experienced different ways of thinking and could see other viewpoints than his own. They were all incorrect, of course, but he understood them. He resented the way he had been treated and planned to destroy those who had made him work for them… but where others were fighting for survival Tsyamoykyo was planning something bigger. He would take over everything the Ancients had once had, destroying all of them in the process. Then he would build wonders greater than anything they had dreamed possible. He would not merely kill them; he would make them *irrelevant*.

Tsyamoykyo's plan advanced slowly but he had time. Whilst others fought for control over potential servitor populations, Tsyamoykyo first constructed a skillset for himself. This included the ability to psionically condition lesser beings so they could not disobey or act against him. He sent out servants to gather resources but did not immediately use them to gain some trivial advantage. Some rivals were aware of his actions but they held him in contempt. For the most part, they ignored him. Those that tried to force him to once again serve were too weak and easily fended off. They became enemies but Tsyamoykyo was able to eliminate those who posed a real threat. The others he left in the game, knowing their activities would confound those of the others.

From the ravaged battlegrounds of the Final War, Tsyamoykyo's servants salvaged everything they could. Much was broken and fragmentary but sufficient for Tsyamoykyo to build a secret haven. Not all salvage was materiel; people fleeing the destruction of the Final War were quietly guided to safe worlds where they could rebuild a technological society. Over time these would become Tsyamoykyo's tools, he hoped, but the path to greatness was very slow. Tsyamoykyo needed more than what had been scavenged. However, his need to remain hidden or overlooked outweighed other concerns. So he built slowly, tools to make tools to make machines to make starships and weapons. The work of millennia but necessary work.

Finally, a message arrived. Tsyamoykyo was aware of an intact base on the world now known as Lydia. A small and insignificant location, it had escaped destruction and apparently been forgotten. His servitors had set up a teleporter-based communications system there; a simple mechanical device designed to drop an object onto a teleporter pad if the base was entered. The installation had equipment Tsyamoykyo wanted, which would enable him to produce large numbers of the biological weapon system designated G482 by those humans who knew of it.

Tsyamoykyo had intended to wait until he was ready before occupying the base and beginning his work, but the teleporter message system would warn him if someone else found the site. At that point he would have to act openly or risk losing access to it. When the base at Twilight's Peak was accidentally entered by Mercedes Karamakar and her crew, Tsyamoykyo had to move. He did so immediately – by his standards. Tsyamoykyo was used to thinking in terms of millennia, so a few decades of distraction and preparation seemed to be but an instant to him. Finally, he sent servitors to take control in his name and prepared his fleet.

The plan was to abduct large numbers of people from nearby worlds and convert them to G482 weapons. This would enable Tsyamoykyo to dominate the local cluster of worlds, creating an instant powerbase. The people there were stupid and primitive but they would do for the time being. However, Tsyamoykyo ran into unexpected resistance. His fleet was intercepted by a force of Droyne vessels in the Trojan Reach.

An Oytrip of Droyne had retained some knowledge of the Ancients and watched fearfully for their return. Agents attempted to counter the machinations of the surviving Ancients; their work mistaken for the efforts of other siblings. As Tsyamoykyo's fleet approached Imperial space, these Droyne did something practically unheard-of. They asked for help.

Help came, in the form of a small fleet belonging to Omicron Division. This was a more or less secret organisation serving the Imperial throne, dedicated to dealing with 'non-conventional' threats. Incredibly advanced by human standards, their ships were puny toys against Tsyamoykyo's weaponry. Still, they were well and bravely handled. Omicron Division died well.

For their part, the Droyne fared little better. Knowing their ships to be outmatched, they directed their main effort not against Tsyamoykyo's warships but his support vessels. Vital equipment was destroyed, along with personnel it would be inconvenient to replace. The mission to Twilight's Peak had to be abandoned but Tsyamoykyo could still take revenge. In this, he was a little too thorough for his own good. The Oytrip might have become a useful asset but he smashed it to ruins in his rage. Leaving a puppet to deal with the survivors, Tsyamoykyo retreated to his fortress to rebuild his power.

Regretting the destruction of the Droyne Oytrip – not the suffering inflicted of course, but the loss of a potential asset – Tsyamoykyo began pacifying the resistance there with a view to using it as a base. The agents and ships sent out to oppose him were to be hunted down and, if possible, captured. How long Tsyamoykyo would have spent preparing is an open question, for events are now unfolding that make immediate action necessary. The conflict between Yaskoydray and Seven appears to have ended the Ancients' Final War. There is nothing to stop Tsyamoykyo from sweeping back into Charted Space and claiming it for himself. His chosen weapons are fear and terrified veneration. By means of massacre and destruction, Tsyamoykyo intends to subjugate the trivial empires of Charted Space and make himself their god.

The Final War between the Ancients is indeed over. Now begins the Final War *against* the Ancients.

THE DROYNE

During the Final War, many populations of Droyne were wiped out or suffered such great losses that they became unviable in the long term. Those populations that retained some technology were left leaderless and isolated from one another, none able to maintain more than a handful of Ancients artefacts. Droyne became extinct on many of their former worlds and most communities lost the ability to caste. This resulted in a regression into what are now known as Chirpers, barely sentient and capable of only the most primitive existence.

By around -75,000 there were virtually no Droyne communities with the ability to caste and fewer still with technology above the stone age. The Droyne were headed for extinction when a remarkable recovery began on around 20 worlds. There, the Droyne suddenly regained the ability to caste. The key to this was a set of golden discs engraved with portentous symbols, known as coyns.

The coyns were a gift from Yaskoydray, who had left his pocket universe for a short time. He taught the Droyne many rituals, some of which acted as triggers for preconditioning built into their genetic structure. With the right triggers an immature Droyne could become a Warrior, a Technician or even a Leader.

Yaskoydray's motives were not altruistic. He wanted the Droyne as useful servitors. Most communities have a saviour figure in their folklore and this is usually represented as being Yaskoydray. Surviving lore claims that Yaskoydray visited the 'recovery worlds' several times and assisted them in regaining an acceptable level of technology. Emissaries from these worlds taught others how to caste but some communities were left as Chirpers. The reasons for this remain unclear.

The result of this intervention was a minor resurgence of Droyne society and a remarkable cultural similarity between communities that had been isolated for millennia. The Droyne language, Oynprith, is identical across all their worlds. Most elements of culture and art are also omnipresent.

However, all of the recovery communities stagnated after a time. The extent of their recovery and the time it too varied considerably but by -50,000 all Droyne societies in Charted Space had reached a steady level of technology and ceased to progress.

This is another hallmark of Yaskoydray's interference. Just as he conditioned his offspring to have specific fields of interest and ways of thinking, he set the recovering Droyne on paths that suited him. Whilst most cultural elements were the same everywhere, each community had a target technological level beyond which it had no desire to progress. Most retained a deep-rooted fear of Ancients technology but a few demonstrated an affinity bordering upon an obsessive desire to possess whatever artefacts they could find.

Not all of the recovered communities adhered perfectly to Yaskoydray's plan. Some encountered events that altered their way of thinking or necessitated an uncomfortable deviation from their intended steady state. Among them was the Oytrip of Vaykouh. Yaskoydray had intended this community to reach a stable mid-tech level and remain there until he decided it was time for them to do something different. An environmental catastrophe beginning around -38,000 forced the leaders of the Oytrip to launch a radical and rather desperate advancement plan. The Oytrip reached TL9 in a matter of decades and obtained jump drive technology from somewhere – possibly a repository of knowledge left for their use when Yaskoydray willed it.

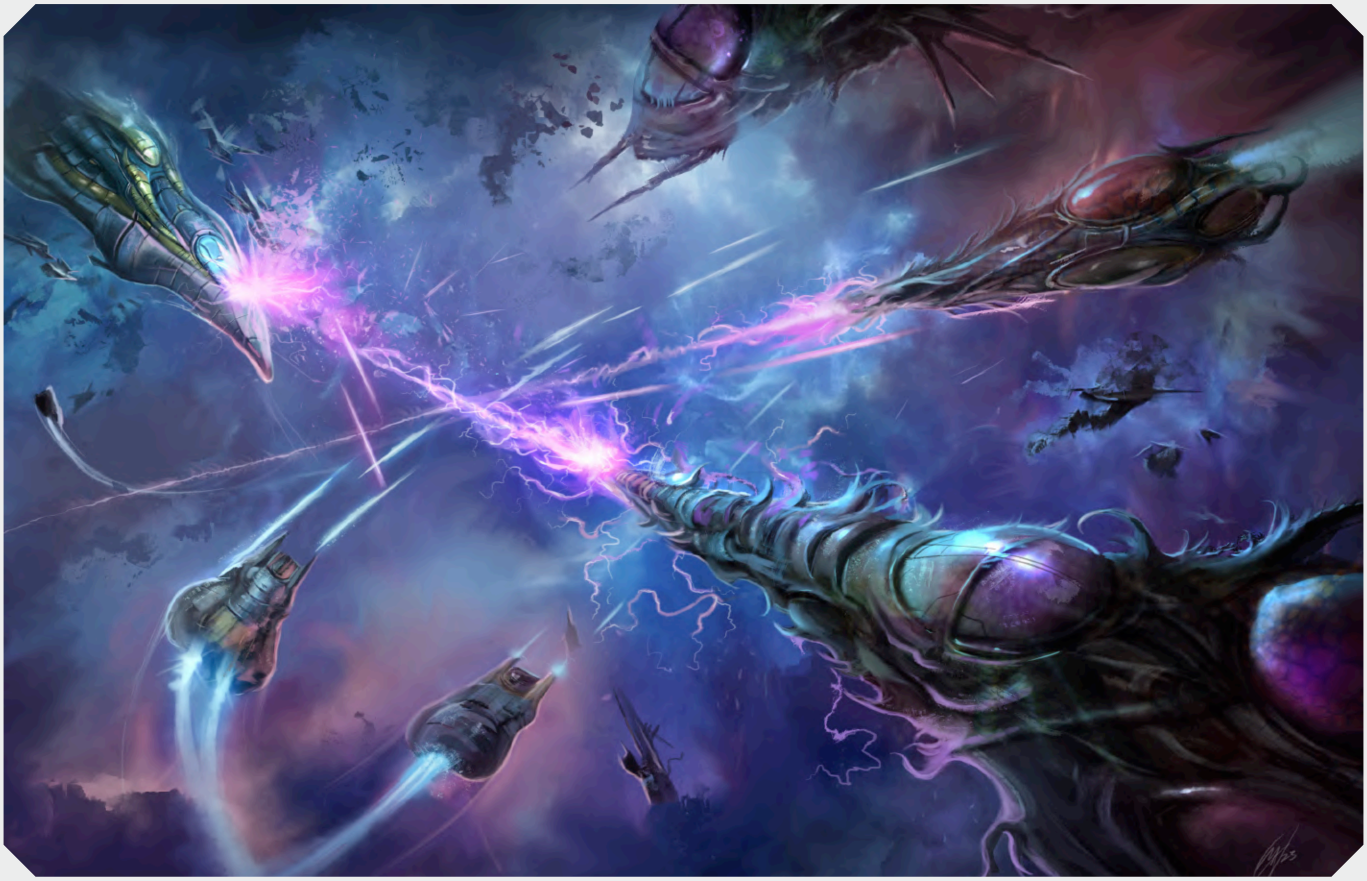
The Oytrip of Vaykouh built starships and searched for a new home. Finding a world to their liking they transplanted their entire remaining population and built a new society. This time they used advanced technology to achieve harmony with their home. They produced virtually no polluting gases and no emissions that could be detected from any distance. Concealment was not their initial intention but they achieved it by accident. When Yaskoydray came back to check on the progress – or lack of it – being made by his servitors he found their world dead, buried under the glaciers of the ice age they had triggered. Yaskoydray may have shrugged but it is unlikely he cared that much about a few million Droyne. He did not look for them and he did not find them by accident.

As a result the Oytrip developed in secret and without guidance. Technology had saved it from extinction and was clearly the key to future success. At some point the Oytrip's leaders realised they had been constrained by their former master and took even greater pains to remain hidden. At the same time they began to search for Ancients artefacts and any sign that the Ancients remained active.

The Oytrip of Vaykouh sent out ships to find and gather artefacts and reached a technological level that might be described as 'alternative TL15.75'. By the time the Third Imperium emerged from the Long Night, Vaykouh ships were ranging all across Charted Space and were mistaken for the vessels of known Oytripin. They hid in plain sight, at least most of the time, and continued their mission. Eventually, one of their vessels discovered the Ancients base at Twilight's Peak. Its crew, under a Leader named Yusote, was instrumental in thwarting an attempt to take control of the base.

However, by then the Oytrip had met the fate its leaders had always dreaded. An Ancient found them and demanded servitude. Some obeyed automatically as the result of preconditioning. Most resisted. The Oytrip was doomed from that moment, its bold experiment in defiance an affront to the Ancients. Before its fleet was smashed, the Oytrip struck heavy blows against its oppressor. Not only was Tsyamoykyo's fleet crippled by the destruction of transports carrying vital equipment but a detached vessel delivered a planetbuster weapon to the base at Twilight's Peak.

Today, the Oytrip of Vaykouh is a ruin whose population are to be eliminated or brought under the control of the Ancient Tsyamoykyo. Having once been a truly independent civilisation it is now to be the instrument of his dominance over everyone in Charted Space. This is not merely expedience; it is also a deliberate punishment for defying the will of the Ancients. Most Droyne know better than that and those who are inspired to do the same will be corrected in time. In the meantime the remnants of the Vaykouh fleet are being hunted down and eliminated. Tsyamoykyo seeks not merely to destroy the people of Vaykouh but to eradicate their dangerous ideas from the cosmos.



DROYNE, ANCIENTS AND THE TRAVELLERS

This campaign involves a great deal of interaction with the Droyne. Full details of this fascinating species are found in *Aliens of Charted Space Volume 2* but sufficient information is presented here to permit the Droyne to be played in the campaign. The Travellers may also develop certain skills which would normally be restricted to Droyne. These are detailed in this chapter.

DROYNE SOCIETY

Droyne society is very alien to humans. There really is no concept of individuality. Even those few Droyne who leave their community on missions have the sole purpose of serving its needs and those needs are determined by the most senior Leaders within the community. Personal glory is irrelevant, as is personal gain. An equivalent to ambition does exist, in the form of wanting to be the very best at what the Droyne does so the community may be better served. Praise and rewards do not happen; a task well completed means the community thrives. Nothing else is important.

A Droyne enters one of the six castes when reaching adulthood, through a complex ritual that triggers rapid development of physical and mental characteristics suited to that caste. The Travellers may by now have realised that the method of producing G482 creatures and other monsters is a perversion of this casteing ritual and has horrific implications. What would have been a sentient person who could live a fulfilling life is instead a mindless monster. Not only is that person robbed of everything they might have been but so is their community and, by definition, the cosmos. Every Droyne corrupted in this manner is one less that might have been part of a great endeavour.

There are six castes in Droyne society:
- **Leaders** provide direction and make decisions at their level. A hierarchy of Leaders-of-Leaders extends to the very top echelons of the community.
- **Sports** are emissaries and messengers, and may be sent out from their community on long missions. They tend to be multi-skilled and are able to withstand the mental stress of being away to an extent other Droyne simply cannot.
- **Drones** have a reproductive role in Droyne society and also a spiritual and ritual one. They function as middle-managers to facilitate the implementation of decisions made by Leaders.
- **Warriors** are specialised to fight enemies and defend the community.
- **Technicians** carry out technical tasks and act as scientific researchers.
- **Workers** perform all physical labour.

The Droyne are generally peaceable creatures, in that they do not go looking for trouble and do not get involved in pointless conflict. This does not mean they are pacifists, nor that they are unwilling to fight for something their Leaders deem worthwhile. Personal gain, glory and advancement through the prosecution of unnecessary wars have no meaning. There has never been a Julius Caesar in Droyne society. Caesar engineered the Gallic Wars that brought him fame, wealth and ultimately dominance over what would become the Roman Empire. He escalated the conflict by finding new ‘foes’ to provoke and presented his defeat of them as a heroic action in the service of Rome.

No Droyne would consider such actions but if war was deemed necessary it would be fought with the utmost vigour. Wars are fought to eliminate a threat or gain access to resources needed by the community. They are fought with cold rationality and ended when either the objective has been attained or there is no prospect of doing so without excessive cost. Negotiations afterward typically take the form of an ultimatum which is accepted or rejected. Where there is some bargaining it is conducted in a dispassionate manner. Leaders do not care how the outcome makes them look; they care about the results for the community. However, some Leaders have differing opinions about what is best for the community as a whole, which can lead to internal politics of a sort recognisable by outsiders.

SOCIETY AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

Modern Droyne society is absolutely dominated by the caste system. Once casted, a Droyne thinks like a member of that caste and desires only to perform the duties of that caste to the benefit of the community. Success means greater value to the community which is satisfying to the individual but not in an 'employee of the month' sort of way. It is better summed up as 'my community is thriving and I am playing my part in that' – a rather humble and selfless attitude which nevertheless is the fundament of Droyne psyche.

This attitude is entirely the opposite of the career-minded go-getter much lauded in human society and also the bold, convention-denying adventurer. Droyne are all about groups and how best to contribute to the group. It is possible it was not always that way; this complete subservience to the group – even by its Leaders – was very convenient for the Ancients. Whilst the Droyne sought peace and stability the Ancients dreamed big dreams and were willing to expend vast resources – including people – to attain them. In some ways this makes the Droyne very dangerous; not in and of themselves but as a tool for those with grand intentions. It may be that the Droyne were manipulated into what they are so they could be most effectively used. This has created a situation where, left alone, the Droyne are no threat to anyone unless attacked or deprived of something they need. Yet at the same time they are an obedient tool for someone with a mind to conquer the universe – someone like a surviving Ancient.

The most fundamental component of Droyne society is a group of at least six individuals known as a Tyafelm. A Tyafelm must contain at least one Droyne of each caste in order to function and will usually have several from at least some of the castes. Some of these groups have a specialist function in which case they will contain a majority of members suited to that task. For example, a Worker Tyafelm will contain multiple workers plus as many Technicians as necessary to support them. It will be led by a Leader, protected by one or more Warriors and have one or more Drones as support and facilitators. If a Tyafelm loses all its members of a particular caste it will either break up and join one or more other families, or adopt a Droyne of the appropriate caste.

A grouping of multiple Tyafelm (typically three to twenty) forms a Dreskay, or extended family. Within a Dreskay, one Tyafelm will specialise as the overall leader of the Dreskay and his supporting family members; others will provide general or specialist functions depending on their composition. Multiple Dreskayin form an Oytrip, or community. These vary in size and type, although most are pastoral communities whose members contentedly work farms and businesses that support the community as a whole. An Oytrip is well-organised without there appearing to be any structure at all. Everyone has a role and the chain of command is understood almost at a genetic level. Property is passed around as required, although normally it rests with an individual until the Leaders decide someone else needs it. A world might have multiple Oytripin or be a single one functioning as a sort of world government. Outsiders may not be able to tell the difference.

Members of an Oytrip are cooperative within their home society but Oytripin do sometimes come into conflict. Whilst alliances and cooperation agreements are routinely brokered by Sports acting as emissaries, the Leaders of an Oytrip cannot conceive of being subordinate to anyone else – Leader of Leaders in an Oytrip is the pinnacle of Droyne society. There is an exception to this: Yaskoydray was able to unify the Droyne under a central authority. A resurgence of the Ancients might cause a reversion to this position as servitors. Many Oytripin would accept this as the natural order of things, probably as a result of ancient programming by Yaskoydray. There are a few who might resist but they stand little chance of remaining independent.

CONFLICT

Conflict does happen between Oytripin or against outsiders. Very occasionally what might be termed a rebellion may take place. This might occur if some Leaders are absolutely convinced their Leaders-of-Leaders are taking the wrong course of action. More commonly, senior Leaders who are proven wrong will commit ritual suicide in order to clear the way for those better able to serve the interests of a community. However, overthrow is possible in extreme cases or part of an Oytrip may leave to set up elsewhere. Otherwise, conflict is rare.

Droyne deal more in absolutes than most other species. Battles are not fought to bloody conclusion 'to make it mean something' as happens in human conflict far too often; it is either worth fighting or it is not. Once objectives have been attained or are demonstrated to be impossible, the Warriors assume a defensive posture or stand down. Droyne do not fight for hate, revenge or honour of the flag. Most conflict is ritualised, with only Warriors as legitimate targets. Warriors do die but the damage caused by the conflict is limited and other functions of the Oytrip largely unimpaired. Support is still provided by Workers, Sports and Technicians; Leaders still make decisions. However in a ritual war only the Warriors may be targeted. In a 'real war' the whole Oytrip is a target and attacks to weaken its structure or economic capability are acceptable. Wars with outsiders are always 'real wars' since non-Droyne cannot be expected to honour or even understand the provisions of ritualised war.

Conflict between the Ancient Tsyamoykyo and the Oytripin he attacks is very much a 'real war', which will shock the Droyne. Seeing other Droyne in the attacking force creates expectations of a ritualised conflict in which collateral damage is minimised or eliminated entirely, so when attacking Warriors open fire on non-combatants the effect is devastating. A shift to real war thinking is rapid, and soon non-combatants are withdrawn from combat zones or learn to stay under cover, but the Oytrip's Leaders are still made uneasy by the behaviour of the attackers. It is not just their violation of the normal rituals of war that upsets them – it is the realisation of why it is happening.

DROYNE COMBAT FORCES

Droyne Warriors fight; other castes lead or support. This rule is never broken. Leaders and Sports may fight in self-defence but the other castes will not. They will flee, throw themselves in front of a Leader, pass ammunition or rescue casualties but they do not fight. That is not their role and nothing can change that. The supporting castes free Warriors to carry out their specialist function or stay out of the fight.

There are three kinds of Warrior. Voyaging Warriors are drivers or pilots. Guard Warriors are escorts for a Leader and protectors of a group or the Oytrip as a whole. Battling Warriors form the backbone of combat formations. When deployed for combat, Warriors are usually grouped into bands of six and led by a senior Warrior. Those with very important tasks such as the personal guards of a major Leader may have a Leader-of-Warriors – a specialist junior member of the Leader caste – in command. In this case the Leader fights only in self-defence but handles his Warriors with finesse and fine judgement. These combat formations are detached from their Dreskay for the duration of the situation, although often the Dreskay is close by to provide support.

The military backbone of an Oytrip is provided by specialist Dreskayin, which contain mostly warriors with a supporting contingent of other castes. This does mean that when on campaign a Droyne force tends to have a lot of 'tail' associated with its 'teeth' as represented by the Warriors. When a force deploys, its constituent elements can be considered in layers:

Fighting formations tend to be all Warriors and are intended to directly contact the enemy.
Supporting formations tend to be Workers and Technicians, protected by some Warriors, and directly support the Fighting formations by bringing ammunition, fixing equipment in the field and rescuing casualties.
Leading formations contain the immediate commander of a set of Fighting and Supporting formations, plus escorts and attendants.
Facilitating formations are mostly Drones, Sports, Technicians and a few Warriors, providing a link between the Commanding formations and those in contact with the enemy. Functions range from medical assistance to electronic warfare.
Commanding formations contain the main Leaders and their entourage, and provide command and control over the whole battle area.
Waiting formations are held in reserve. This includes Warrior groups assigned to protect the rear area or lines of communication to the fighting formations.

This general model works at all levels, the structure repeating at higher and higher levels, creating a multi-layered command structure capable of fighting a war across an entire star system. Whilst not efficient by the standards of the Imperial Army, it is a resilient structure that fits well with the rest of Droyne society.

Force selection for a deployment or mission is a matter of assigning enough specialist Dreskayin to provide the necessary number of Warriors and supporting castes. This means that the number of Droyne in a deployment can vary a lot. If there are not quite enough Warriors in the assigned Dreskayin for a task, another must be added. It is not possible to transfer Warriors from one to another, although detachment for a few days is acceptable. More details of Droyne forces and the terms used for formations are found in *Aliens of Charted Space Volume 2*.

LEAVING THE OYTRIP

Droyne are completely dependent on their Oytrip for a reason to exist but occasionally may have to leave or function outside it. Most lone Droyne simply cannot, with the exception of Sports with a long mission to fulfil. Even then, it is the thought of the home Oytrip that sustains the Sport throughout their task. Most Droyne who have lost their Oytrip or been expelled for any reason simply die, by means of a process called Krinaytsyu. It is a ritual of meditation in which the individual simply stops living.

Occasionally someone who leaves will find a sort of pseudo-Oytrip which may give them a reason to continue living. This is termed a Kroyloss and is a uniquely Droyne social institution. One might be formed to accomplish a task or could be a more or less accidental coming-together of individuals for mutual support. Such institutions are generally short-lived, with members finding an Oytrip to join – and be valued by – or else choosing Krinaytsyu.

DROYNE SKILLS AND TRAITS

Some traits and skills possessed by the Droyne are important in this campaign, as Droyne feature heavily and the Travellers may learn some of their secret skills. All Droyne possess the following Traits.

Close Combat Aversion: Droyne dislike close combat, possibly due to their light bone structure which makes blows more damaging. Unarmed Combat is not quite a 'Black Skill' but few Droyne learn to fight without weapons or other mechanical aids. A Droyne struck with a weapon that relies on impact, such as a baseball bat or club, suffers an additional point of damage per 1D rolled. In addition, all Droyne suffer DM-2 when fighting without weapons as their natural reaction is to flinch away rather than taking decisive action.

Droyne Claws: All Droyne have a sharp claw on their hands and feet, which can be used in combat if necessary. This is a last resort; Droyne dislike close combat and will avoid it if at all possible. Claws do 1D+2 damage if employed as a weapon. They are more commonly used as a tool or an aid in gripping some surfaces. A Droyne that can dig their claws in gains DM+1 when trying to remain anchored or to keep hold of something.

Wings: All Droyne have wings, although some are vestigial. Newly casted Droyne must determine wing size by rolling 1D. Wings are vestigial on a 1D roll of 1–3, small on 4–5 and large on 6. Droyne who have small or large wings automatically gain Flight 0.

DROYNE-SPECIFIC AND BLACK SKILLS

Some skills are considered 'Black' by the Droyne. These Black Skills include Carouse, Deception, Gambler, Persuade and Streetwise. All are connected with deceit or activity alien to the Oytrip-oriented lifestyle of the Droyne, such that learning these skills or engaging in these activities somehow diminishes the Droyne doing so. A Droyne with any levels in Black Skills is likely to be something of an outsider in mainstream Droyne society. Going too far into the rabbit hole of deception and individual thought can lead to a Droyne being expelled from the society they learned those skills to serve.

Ancients Tech: Most Droyne suffer from a superstitious terror of Ancients devices and sites, and will not go anywhere near them if they have the choice. Those designated to use, tend or simply preserve knowledge of Ancients devices may not be any less afraid but are able to conquer fear through knowledge. The Ancients Tech skill is used when figuring out the function of a device or installation, and more commonly to use a device that has been preserved since the time of the Ancients. When the Travellers gain this skill it provides a DM to figure out devices and perhaps even duplicate them.

Appeal: The Appeal skill deals with what might be termed internal diplomacy in Droyne society. External interactions are governed by Diplomat as usual but Appeal is used when a Droyne wants a superior or the Droyne in charge of a different group – this might be a force of Warriors or an entire planetary Oytrip – to hear what they have to say. Appeal is also used by Sports acting as emissaries when conducting diplomacy with other Oytripin. Success ensures the Droyne has observed the correct formalities – if not they will not be heard at all – in addition to presenting the case well. A Drone with a good idea has no chance of persuading a Leader to implement it without using the Appeal skill successfully but might approach a Sport about acting as a go-between. They would still need to make an Appeal check to get the Sport to listen but the difficulty would be much lower than if they went direct to the Leader in defiance of normal protocol.

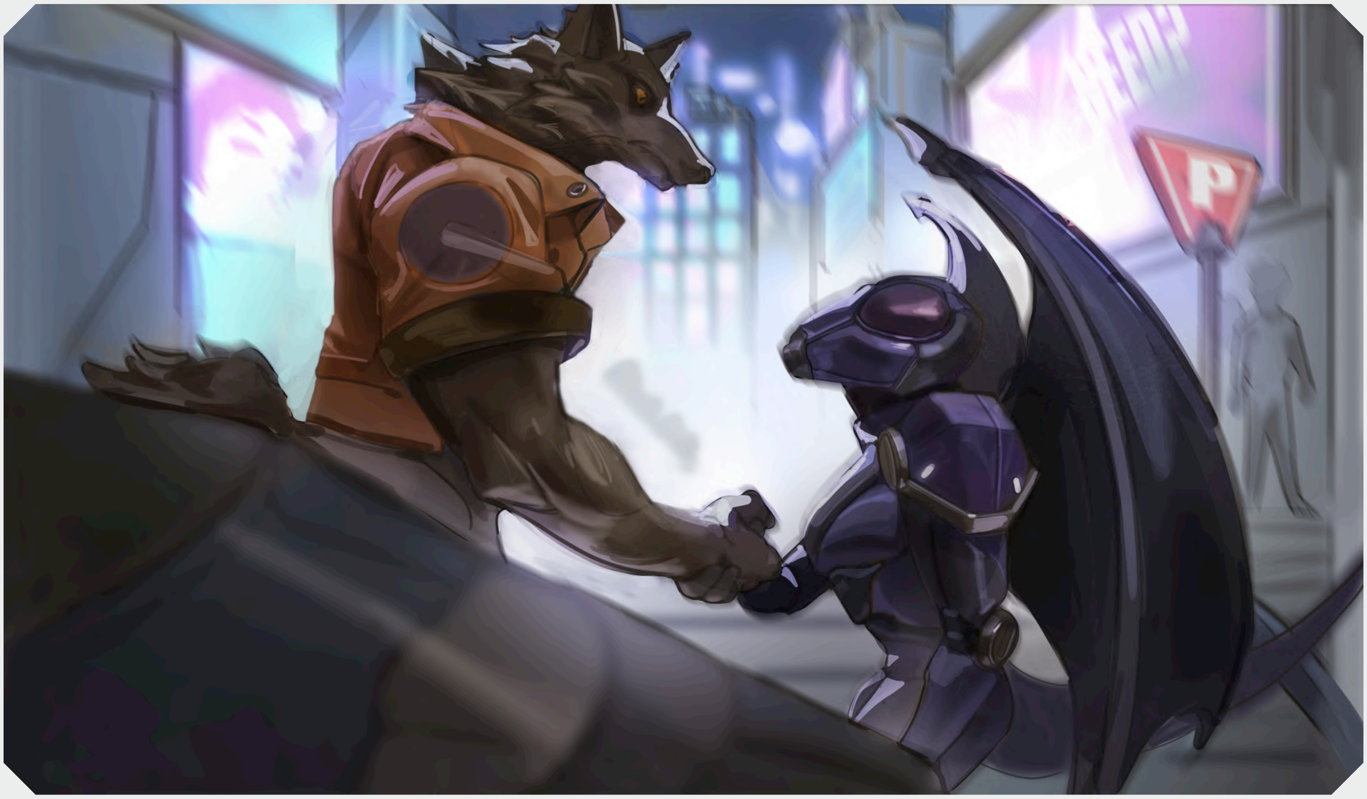
Art (Droyne): Droyne art is not purely decorative. It conveys information and may even play a part in the correct function of an installation or device. A starship that is decorated properly will ‘feel’ better to her crew and might actually perform better. A basic level of skill in Art (Droyne) allows the creation of proper decoration for routine purposes. At level 2 the Droyne can create informative and ‘improving’ art, such as that which is felt to make a starship jump better. At level 4 the Droyne can create psionic trigger-art, which conveys detailed information by triggering the observer’s brain to essentially imagine what the artist wanted them to.

Caste (caste): There are six caste-related skills – Warrior, Drone and so forth – which can only be received by members of that caste. This skill indicates how well the Droyne can perform the routine duties of their caste, including rituals and operation of devices. It is tied almost directly to rank within the caste. Droyne do not have a formal rank structure in the usual sense but each time a Droyne gains a level in Caste they are likely to take on more responsibility. The Leader-of-Leaders with the highest Caste (Leader) skill in an Oytrip is in overall charge, even if there is – for example – a Leader-of-Warriors with a higher Caste (Leader).

Flight: This skill is dealt with on page 14. A Droyne who receives Flight skill but whose wings are too small to fly may select one of Drive, Recon, or Survival.

Outsider (race or culture): The Outsider skill is used when conducting dealings with non-Droyne. A high skill level does not suggest the Droyne has any particular liking for the species in question but they will understand the culture. This permits diplomacy to be undertaken without utterly confusing outsiders but has wider implications. A Droyne with Outsider (Vargr), for example, is aware that Vargr conduct trade and warfare very differently to Droyne. They may be able to predict what goods will sell well in Vargr markets, or how a military campaign will unfold. A check can be used to make reasonable and general predictions about members of the subject race or culture.

In addition, where responses of the subject are important – such as using Broker to negotiate a good deal – the Droyne cannot receive a DM greater than their Outsider skill within the relevant culture. The converse is also true; an outsider trying to use advanced negotiating skills will find they are lost on a Leader who does not comprehend much of what is being said. A Leader who is supported by those with this skill can use the highest level available as an enabler for his own skills. If, for some reason, the Droyne decide to explain what they are doing or why, Outsider is used to frame this in terms the outsiders can comprehend. Since few Droyne have this skill, much of what they say and do remains utterly incomprehensible.



THE ANDOR CACHE

Andor is the lost homeworld of the Droyne. By the end of the Ancients' Final War, not all Droyne communities knew that and most forgot during the dark ages that followed. Where the knowledge was retained, Yaskoydray expunged it during his alterations of Droyne society around -75000. For once, his reasons for doing so are fairly clear – at least to those who know what he hid in plain sight on Andor.

Yaskoydray has assured his own immortality by cloning bodies and storing them ready to transfer his knowledge and personality when his current form grew old or was injured. His project on Andor served two purposes – to ensure an alternative supply of clones if necessary and also to discover if his own supergenius was the most that could be achieved. In the latter case, he may have been afraid that someone smarter and more powerful than himself might someday emerge, or he might have hoped he could one day transfer to a body that unlocked even higher levels of mental capability.

A special population of Droyne was created on Andor and the rest of the people there were charged with caring for and protecting them. These prime Droyne specimens were given a reservation, as were several very similar groups. All would live a simple life but one dedicated to mental and spiritual improvement, whilst the main Droyne population of Andor were programmed to feel comfortable at a stable TL9. Most of these rustic populations are a combination of decoy and control group, monitored by the main Droyne population but otherwise left alone most of the time. A visitor to Andor would see groups of Droyne living apart from the main population and might not realise one of them was special.

By reducing Andor to the status of an early starfaring society, Yaskoydray made it uninteresting to most outsiders. There are many Droyne Oytripin, few of them remotely interested in the affairs of the wider universe. The one at Andor looks no different to the casual observer. The usual stand-offishness of the Droyne serves to cover the anomalies present in the Oytrip. Among these is possession of an unusual amount of Ancients artefacts, well hidden among the TL9 systems common in the cities of Andor. This Tech Level was chosen for exactly that reason – it explains the capabilities of the Oytrip and grants a level of knowledge sufficient to maintain and use the artefacts given to the population but is not high enough to attract interest. In fact, as far as Yaskoydray is concerned the sole purpose of Andor is to hide and protect the special population.

The special group was subject to selective breeding, with new members occasionally added for the sake of genetic diversity. The Droyne of Andor were to watch for signs that a new super-Droyne might be emerging. Even if one did not, Yaskoydray would find this population useful as a source of backup clones if his own archive were ever to be threatened. In short, the special population on Andor was partly an experiment and partly a backup plan. None of Yaskoydray's offspring ever knew of the plan, except the most lowly of them all.

Tsyamoykyo was directed to perform much of the early research and experimentation. He has always known about the genetic cache on Andor and someday hoped to exploit it. The time has arrived, he believes. His plan is to remove a significant proportion of the special Droyne – Tsyamoykyo terms them Myoyux, which translates roughly to 'acquired hope for the future' – and use them to breed himself either new and upgraded bodies or perhaps genetic material which could be used to uplift his current form. He intends to wipe out the remaining Myoyux on Andor. In part this is to cover his tracks in case another Ancient realises what he is doing and in part it is nothing more than a gesture of spite towards Yaskoydray.

The Travellers will arrive too late to save the Andor cache population but a few specimens may have survived. Tracking them down will reveal their true nature and give a clue as to Tsyamoykyo's intentions. Ultimately, the Travellers will decide the fate of this unique genetic group. Eliminating them would reduce the possibility of another Grandfather-like being, which the Travellers may see as desirable. On the other hand, they may choose to save the Myoyux. They are a potential threat perhaps but also innocent primitives who have been nothing but the victims of others' ambitions.

THE IMPERIUM AND THE ANCIENTS

The Third Imperium is well aware the Ancients once existed, or rather its most senior nobles are. Information is very much on a need-to-know basis, so most ordinary members of the armed forces and the junior nobility are not briefed on the subject unless they absolutely have to be. The Imperium does not deny the existence of the Ancients and does not even downplay their importance. By generally ignoring rumours and refusing to be drawn into discussion, the Imperial authorities seek to maintain the impression that anything connected with – or claimed to be connected with – the Ancients falls under business-as-usual.

The Imperium does use the term 'Ancients' but generally in a vague and quite misleading way. It does not deny that there were starfaring civilisations in the past but generally lumps all previous civilisations of interest under the Ancients label. This serves to confuse the issue and also allows areas to be secured as 'potential Ancients sites' for other reasons. When intrepid journalists, Ancients Hunters and assorted other troublemakers finally get access to a site they often find it is in fact the ruins of a TL4 civilisation that died out 50,000 years ago. This creates the impression that the Imperium does not take the Ancients seriously and therefore that they are not considered a threat. This impression is entirely false.

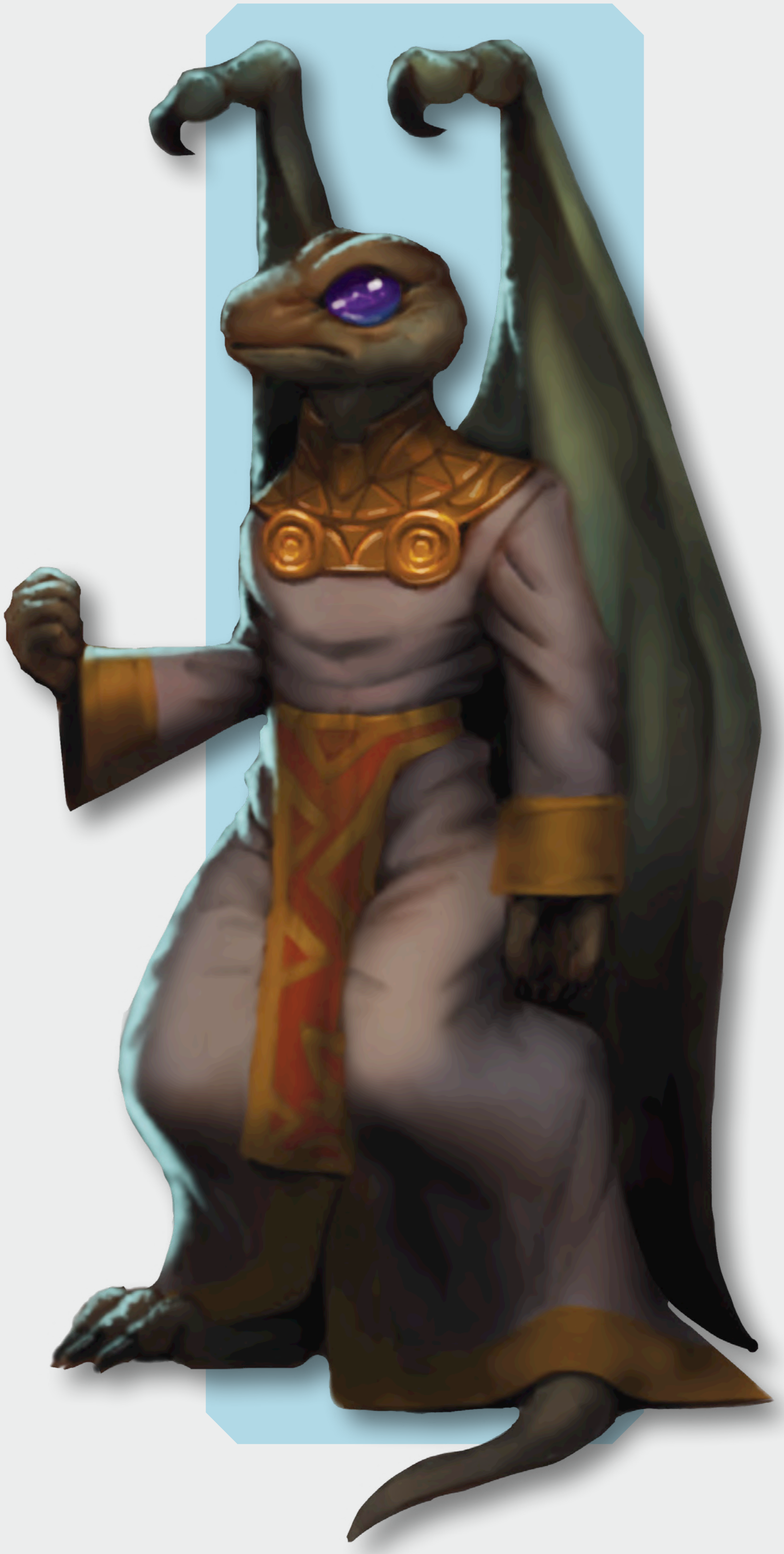
The Imperial authorities make a much clearer distinction between the Ancients and 'ancient civilisations'. They are aware that a resurgence of the Ancients could be catastrophic, although they greatly underestimate the scale of the threat. On the other hand, the chance of anything like that happening is considered to be vanishingly small. Governance is always a matter of balancing likelihood versus severity and every year the Emperor is briefed on newly-discovered major threats. Most of these turn out to be based on a dubious inference made by someone with an agenda or an over-specialised viewpoint. Addressing any of these threats absorbs time and budgets, so many are ignored or tossed on the 'more information needed' pile.

The Ancients threat is different. There is no doubt at the highest levels that the Ancients did exist and would pose an extreme threat. However, the prospect of their return has a unique combination of extreme unlikeliness and an inability to do much about it. The Imperium therefore chooses to focus on a threat it can counter; that of another power gaining access to a limited amount of Ancients technology.

Long-term projects attempt to create counters to this threat that would work against any wielder of Ancients technology and might, if rolled out in sufficient numbers, actually provide a defence if Yaskoydray or his progeny were to return to Charted Space. That day is far off, so in the meantime trusted members of the administration and the Imperial services monitor the activities of Ancients Hunters and try to seize artefacts for analysis. Chief among the agencies involved in this covert activity is Omicron Division.

Omicron Division does not exist solely to counter an Ancients threat. It receives weaponry and equipment based on Ancients technology and some artefacts that may be useful, and is tasked with countering all exotic threats. If a plague of zombies began overrunning Imperial worlds or electronic systems turned on their operators it would be Omicron Division that led the resistance. Recent events have refocused Omicron Division's attention on the Ancients, with much of their available resources committed to an operation in the Trojan Reach. This turned out to be a death-trap for which Omicron Division's finest were unprepared. Other assets have been mobilised but will take months to arrive. In the meantime, the Imperium has at best a patchy picture of what is happening on its Spinward frontier. Its response is slowed and confused by the fact that its own administrators do not, for the most part, believe the threat is real. That may change in the near future.

TSYAMOYKYO, ONCE THE LEAST



The being now known as Tsyamoykyo has the physical form of a Droyne. He is one of Yaskoydray's grandchildren, cloned from a first-generation clone. The first-generation clones were conditioned to be broader in their ways of thinking and areas of interest than those that followed, with each grandchild a more focused version of some aspect of the first-generation Ancient. In the case of Tsyamoykyo, the focus was on the obscure and minute in detail.

Tsyamoykyo did not attract a great following for himself, nor did he create large-scale wonders. His talents were called upon more and more to solve problems for his siblings, to the point where he was at best a scientific consultant and in many cases considered little more than a servitor. Tsyamoykyo resented this treatment but was powerless to do anything about it at first.

One advantage that Tsyamoykyo did enjoy, although it did not seem like one at the time, was exposure to many different approaches to problems and ways of thinking. Some of the sons were reckless, some cautious and some positively timid. Setbacks typically caused them to become even more like themselves – recklessness was intensified rather than caution being learned. Tsyamoykyo saw this and developed a more balanced viewpoint, although offset by his burning desire for revenge.

Among Tsyamoykyo's creations were modifications of living creatures to serve as weapons, mineral extraction systems and even spacecraft. He also learned the ways of 'hard' (non-biological) systems and became invaluable to Yaskoydray and other major Ancients. When the Final War broke out he was only too happy to unleash his creations against his siblings – who had not suspected they were being given weapons that could be turned against them.

Tsyamoykyo had spent much of his time on projects for other Ancients but not all of it. He had created a pocket universe hiding place and several repositories for weapons and machinery. He gathered what resources he could, plundering the lair of one of his siblings who had been killed by machines made for him by the humble Tsyamoykyo. Humble no longer, Tsyamoykyo began to build.

Tsyamoykyo embraces all technological fields of the Ancients – matter, high energy and others more exotic – but he still favours the biological. He has learned to condition subordinates so that they can never betray him. This is a lengthy process so wherever possible he prefers naked fear to keep them in line. This is as much about ego as expediency; Tsyamoykyo likes to see people grovel.

The fact that the Oytrip of Vaykouh dared defy and even oppose him has incensed Tsyamoykyo, causing him to make intemperate decisions. His natural inclination is to proceed carefully and subtly but his rage requires graphic gestures. In this, Tsyamoykyo is perhaps more dangerous than Yaskoydray ever could be. Grandfather sought to control everything so that he could get things done and was callous but not cruel for the sake of it. Tsyamoykyo wants the cosmos to tremble before him and actually enjoys the suffering of others.

Tsyamoykyo's overall plan has not changed. He intends to take control of Charted Space and use its populations to undertake great works. Many of these might be called pointless wonders, created just to demonstrate his power and willingness to expend planetary populations in order to finish a project quickly. He also intends to tear down the works of others. This includes terraformed worlds or systems where planets have been moved. What the other Ancients built, he will take for his own or utterly destroy.

The surviving Ancients all have their fortresses, mainly located in pocket universes each accessed from a specific point. Tsyamoykyo knows where they are and how to enter, and has developed a weapon that will collapse a pocket universe. This will destroy everything inside. As the whim takes him he might close a sibling's universe without warning, or he may send emissaries to tell them what he is about to do. The idea of vicariously gloating appeals to his desire for revenge whilst the no-warning option is much safer. For his most hated enemies he has a savage fate planned; he will kill off their servitors and seal their pocket universe before starting the process of slow collapse. His foes will die alone after suffering centuries of powerlessness.

Tsyamoykyo is not ready but the time is right and this opportunity may not come again. The clash between Yaskoydray and Seven has removed one (or both) of them from the field and Tsyamoykyo has the means to deal with the other. This is a clinical matter of activating a long-dormant system. His enemies will have instants only to realise their pocket universe is collapsing; long enough to know despair but not sufficient to do anything about it. The other surviving Ancients are distracted, hiding, or have no interest in taking control of Charted Space. They can be dealt with once Tsyamoykyo has established himself.

This means that Yaskoydray and Seven are out of the picture at the start of the campaign. Referees who are fond of Yaskoydray and do not want him eliminated from the universe (assuming he is not already) may decide that he has gone off to do whatever he feels like doing and will not be around for the next few thousand years. Be that as it may, the default campaign start is that both Seven and Yaskoydray are out of the picture. Perhaps they killed each other or Tsyamoykyo eliminated the victor of their battle; the Referee must decide what best suits their own campaign. Tsyamoykyo has taken out the most dangerous of his potential foes by collapsing their pocket universes. He could have killed them all but that would make it impossible to loot their fortresses… and besides, what good is victory if the enemy is dead before they know the war has started?

Tsyamoykyo is pragmatic and cautious by nature, and normally would take the safe instakill option. However, he is blinded by hate and rage, and cannot accept mere victory. He wants to receive surrenders, to reject pleas for mercy, to show his siblings how far above them he has risen and how he has undone their works. The greatest victory of all would be the submission of Yaskoydray… but Tsyamoykyo is not quite insane enough to think he can achieve that. Thus if Grandfather cannot be eliminated, all of his offspring must surrender to the one who was once the least of them. Tsyamoykyo might even let a few of them live.

TECHNOLOGY AND TALENTS OF THE ANCIENTS

The Ancients used a wide range of technology, although for the most part individuals had their own preferences. Having unlocked so many secrets of the cosmos they could choose how to solve any problem. A few mixed technologies just because they could but most were concerned with working towards their agenda rather than playing around to see what they could do. Most chose 'hard' technologies, making extensive use of metals and advanced composites, but a few preferred 'soft' solutions based around living tissue.

Items made from 'soft' materials were grown into whatever the Ancient wanted them to be. Large structures and starships were particularly difficult to make in this manner, so in many cases the soft-material adherents still used metallic starships and buildings. Soft technologies typically involved modifying an existing creature or plant to fit a purpose. Notable among these was the creature now designated G482, which was created by perverting the casteing ritual of the Droyne. The resulting creature was cunning but not sentient, and extremely deadly. This of course meant that an immature Droyne was robbed of its self and turned into a monster. It was not so much that the Ancients considered this a necessary expedient than they did not consider it at all. They did whatever they wanted.

It is far more common to encounter hard material relics from the Ancients era than soft ones, for obvious reasons. These could be created by a variety of methods. One of the most effective was psionic alteration of matter. Groups of servitors – for this menial task was beneath the Ancients themselves – were instructed to peer into the very structure of matter and move components to create new materials. In some cases these modified materials and devices were then subjected to further manipulation, creating some incredible effects.

The Ancients could quite literally alter the laws of physics, at least locally and to a modest degree. What they could achieve with that was beyond even the imagination of modern scientists. Subatomic particles are subject to quantised energy levels which causes them to behave in predictable ways. By altering the stable quanta the Ancients were able to distort the fabric of the universe to their liking. This, and other techniques used by the Ancients, made it impossible to reverse-engineer most of their devices. Without quantum-altering capability the materials for the devices cannot be produced nor shaped into a useful form.

Some elements of Ancients technology can be replicated at lower Tech Levels but for the most part their devices might as well be magical relics left behind by gods. To create such wonders a species would have to expand their understanding of the cosmos to the point where they rivalled the Ancients themselves. It was knowledge, not practical applications of technology, that enabled the Ancients to do what they did. Some of that knowledge lives on in the surviving Ancients and it will be many long millennia before any other species learns enough to even attempt such wonders.

Yaskoydray did not give any of his offspring all of his knowledge. It suited his purposes that they had gaps that only he could fill. Most were taught what they needed to fulfil the function Yaskoydray had in mind for them, and little more, but that did not stop the more ambitious from doing their own research. It is possible that some achieved a level of cosmic understanding close to that of their sire, which may have been a factor in the decision to wipe them out.

The situation with most people finding an Ancients artefact is a little like a stone-age primitive stumbling across a portacomp. With no idea that such things are possible, the primitive would likely not recognise it as anything but a weirdly shaped and clearly non-natural object. The primitive might be shown how to turn on the device and even carry out simple tasks using it, but would require a lot of education before they could be trusted to produce a correct tax return for the portacomp's owner. As to making such a device, the primitive would need instruction in science and technology, manufacturing techniques and programming to be able to make the attempt. They would have to develop mineral and metal extraction techniques – starting with the idea that metal can be heated and worked – just to get the necessary materials.

Moulding the case, etching the circuit boards, developing a suitable power source… every stage the primitive would have to go through is based on a field of science they do not even know exists. This was the situation faced by the Ancients with their servitors; it took a long time to create a society capable of supporting their endeavours. Some did not trouble themselves but doing everything directly was time-consuming as well. The most successful of them shaped societies over time, guided their development and then instructed them in the details. It is not really surprising that population centres were targets in the Final War; a servitor population embodied thousands of years of effort and eliminating one weakened the Ancient it served.

One result of this is that one shimmersuit or disintegrator is not necessarily like another. They may have been produced in very different ways and have differing power levels. Some Ancients could produce shields that would stop any disintegrator; others were only partially effective. Some could create teleporters and temporal weapons capable of destroying a target decades in the past. Others made living weapons that were effectively unperceivable to their victims. The technology presented here is what will be encountered in this campaign. There is no reason why the Travellers might not find examples with different characteristics, or even more incredible devices. Tsyamoykyo has developed a device that can collapse a pocket universe; perhaps one of the other Ancients was working on a full-scale version. What the Travellers might do with universe-buster cannon is a question that must be considered, of course.

LARGE-SCALE TECHNOLOGY

Despite the compartmentalisation of activities, enough concepts were shared among the Ancients that most of their constructions are similar. They had big goals so tended to use the most efficient or convenient methods to solve problems like shelter or mobility. The most commonly used material is a metal-like substance with a pearlescent appearance. It is usually cool to the touch and has a huge heat capacity which makes it difficult to damage with lasers and energy weapons. This material is typically found in three subtypes.

The commonest subtype, known as Inert, is the easiest to make. It is a standard construction material used for starship hulls, building walls and the like. Its characteristics are set when it is manufactured and cannot be changed afterward without complete re-engineering at the subatomic level. It is possible for someone with the right talents to do this in localised areas, essentially building in functions as required. The majority of ships and structures are created mostly from Inert with more complex materials used for components such as drives, power generation and so on.

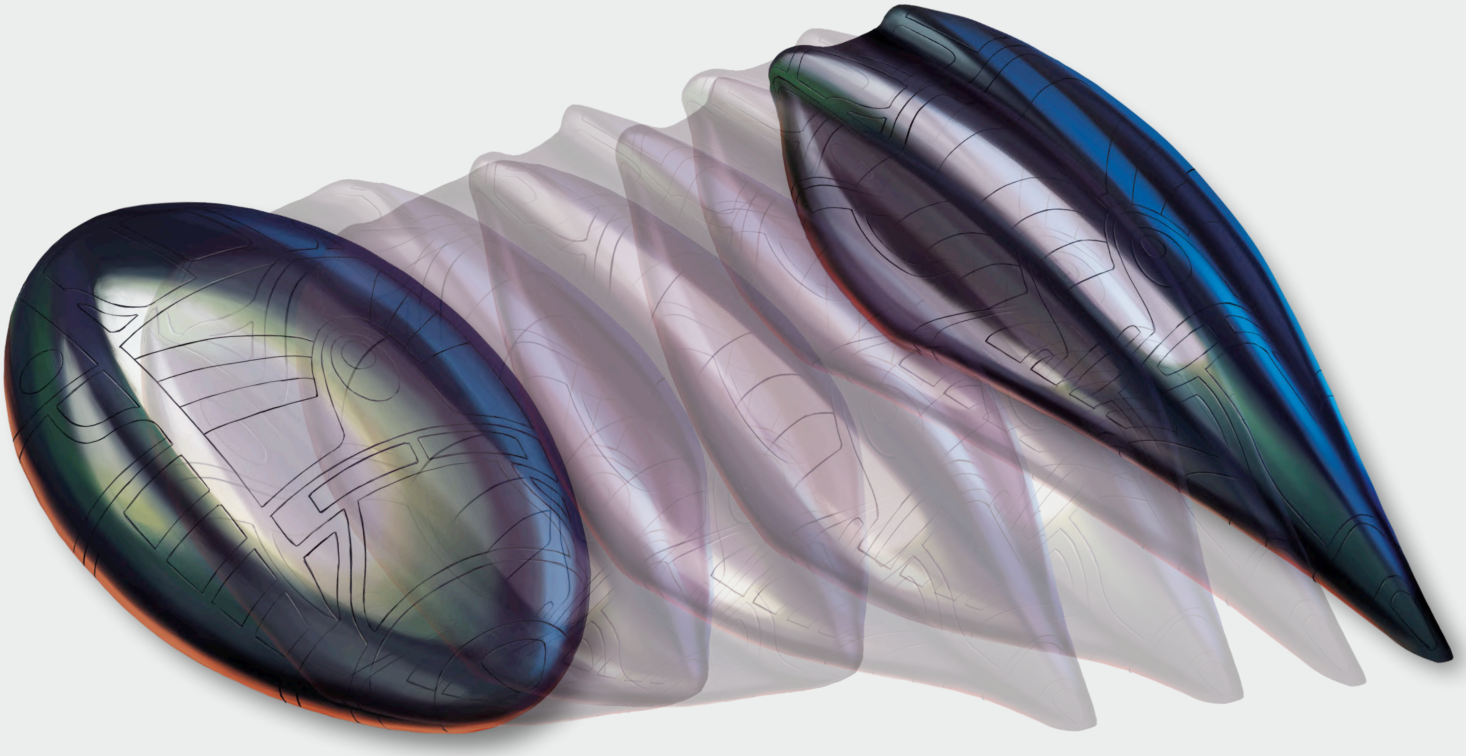
The material used to create most devices is termed Formed. Like Inert it cannot be repurposed without complete re-engineering but can be set up to perform tasks when commanded. Activation of functions is normally telepathic unless the device is intended to be used by non-psionic underlings. Sections of Formed can be built into walls and hulls made mostly of Inert. One of the functions Formed can be set for is to change shape upon command. There are limits to this capability, determined by the amount of skill and effort that went into producing the Formed. The rods on Calefaction (*Mysteries of the Ancients*) were made from Formed, with a limited capability to extend and contract.

The most difficult material to make is termed Malleable. This can be telepathically commanded to change its nature, usually between two or three set forms but occasionally more. Malleable is used to make the most advanced tools and equipment, capable of switching form or size. A large tool can be carried as a miniature version of itself, or a robe can become a staff. Malleable is very difficult to produce and used by only the most valued of servants.

Formed and Malleable can change shape and size but cannot alter how much matter is present. It can be compacted or spread out but it is still there. Thus whilst in theory it would be possible to shrink a starship down to the size of a pea, it would not be possible to carry it around in a pocket. If the change of shape or size undertaken by an item is resisted – for example because it is encased in the rock of a doomed planet – then it will exert immense force capable of eventually cracking the bedrock apart. The exact effects of such a shape change depend on a great many factors beyond the understanding of non-Ancients. In other words their near-magical materials can do whatever the Referee wants them to do. Their limitations are likewise for the Referee to decide.

STRUCTURES AND SHIPS

The majority of structures are built mostly of Inert, with a small amount of Formed. Ships contain more Formed and the very best of them might be made entirely from Malleable. Appearance can be whatever the



Ancient wants it to be but normally curves and ovoids are favoured along with a silvery-grey pearlescent appearance. Characteristics can vary considerably but the following are common:

Outer installation walls and major structural components can be considered to have Armour 30 on the spacecraft scale and require a further 10 points of spacecraft-level damage to make a fist-sized hole. 100 points will make a hole big enough for a human to walk through and 1,000 points are needed to completely destroy a section of wall or bulkhead about five metres square. Walls and bulkheads are self-repairing, requiring 2D minutes to reseal a one mete square area and a further 2D minutes to bring it back up to full strength. Internal walls, fittings and doors are considered to have the same amount of armour and hits but on the ground scale.

Walls and floors feel smooth but offer good grip to anyone running on them. Mundane functions such as heating, cooling, movement of air and water, are usually carried out by the structure or hull. Anything that needs to be moved is conveyed through hollows – essentially, pipes – in the walls, floor and ceilings. Gases are diffused through the walls as needed and will be cleaned of toxins or modified to create a suitable environment. Likewise the internal gravitational conditions of a ship or structure can be altered – to a modest degree – by the Ancients' equivalent of the primitive grav plates used by most starfaring species in Charted Space. This function is built into a starship hull by implanting a thin layer of Formed in an otherwise Inert (and therefore much easier to produce) hull and bulkheads.

FORCE FIELDS

Fine control over gravity and other fundamental forces enable the Ancients to generate a variety of fields. Some of them are partially understood by the civilisations of Charted Space, whilst others are as yet undreamed-of. Basic gravity fields are easy for the Ancients; building gravity control up to +/- 1G into a structure is a matter of course, along with other basic life support systems. These fields can be finely controlled, allowing one person to experience a different gravitational strength to another even as they move around. More advanced gravity fields can produce stronger effects or counteract sudden occurrences. For example, when a fragile object is knocked off a bench the local gravity field changes to prevent it from breaking. Other fields have specialist uses and may not be built into a structure if the need was not perceived at the time of construction.

Ancients Field Effects

Field Type	Notes
Gas Retention Field	Gas retention fields are quite difficult to create, even for the Ancients. They will prevent an outrush of gas if a hull is holed or prevent mixing where there is a difference in atmosphere type or pressure between two areas. Objects larger than a gas molecule can pass unimpeded. Gas retention requires a considerable amount of specialist components nearby. These can be most easily embedded in the walls around a doorway.
Object Retention Field	Object retention is much easier than gas retention as it requires only the creation of a ‘solid’ barrier which blocks movement of even the smallest particles. Most such fields produce a characteristic white glow as a result of particle interactions within the field. Commonly used to create ‘light bridges’ across obstacles, an object retention field could be used for almost any purpose a solid wall could. An object retention field can be considered to have Protection 20 and 40 hits. If this is exceeded the field is sufficiently disrupted to fail. It regenerates at the rate of 1D hits per round.
Repulsor Field	Repulsors use localised gravitational effects to push an object away. If the condition of the object afterward is of no concern this is relatively easy to do. The Imperium builds repulsors for missile defence but these are clumsy things which sometimes tear their targets apart. Ancients repulsors are precise, more powerful and can be used to move an object gently.
Tractor Field	Whereas a repulsor can only move objects directly away from it – although multiple repulsors do give an element of directional control if widely enough separated – a tractor field can move objects in any direction out to its maximum range.
Anti-Psionic Field	An anti-psionic field prevents the use of psionic abilities across it. It is usually set up in the hull of a ship or the outer walls of a structure to act as a waveguide, as it is much harder to create a shield without some kind of matter to guide it. The field will stop psionic teleportation, clairvoyance and the like, and will prevent the use of telekinesis on objects on the other side of the field. However, it will not stop other forms of teleportation. An object accelerated by telekinesis will pass through the field unimpeded – the field only blocks psionic effects, not mundane movements even if caused by psionics. An anti-psionic field could also be created to prevent any use of psionics within an area but this would only be useful as a prison for enemies – no Ancient would want their own psionic powers nullified.
Anti-Teleport Field	An anti-teleport field prevents technological teleportation into an area but does not prevent psionic teleportation as this uses an entirely different mechanism.
Black Globe	A black globe projector creates a spherical field at a pre-set distance from the device. The globe is entirely impervious to all forms of energy and matter. Energy striking the globe is absorbed by the device and must be stored to prevent a catastrophic discharge. The field can coexist with matter already present, such as the floor of a room in which a black globe was generated. Objects striking the globe are robbed of their kinetic energy but remain unharmed. In practice this means that projectiles striking the globe just stop against it and remain there. No energy can pass out of a black globe, rendering occupants safe but powerless to perceive or affect the universe outside.
White Globe	A white globe is a more advanced and difficult to produce version of the black globe technology. It appears the same from the outside and has the same effects but is far more selective about what sorts of energy are permitted to enter and leave. As a result, occupants can choose to allow visible light below a harmful intensity to cross the field, enabling them to see out but not to be shot with lasers. Other wavelengths can be similarly treated.

Field Type	Notes
Silver Globe	Silver globes function similarly to white globes but can be set to reflect some wavelengths. In some cases this takes the form of scattering, which is visually spectacular but not useful as a weapon. Other variants permit direct reflection.
Nuclear Interaction Field	Nuclear dampers are a relatively simple technology possessed by many non-Ancients. They cause radioactive materials to shed particles at low energy states, essentially causing rapid but harmless radioactive decay. The result is to render nuclear munitions or materials inert. The more advanced version possessed by the Ancients can cause the decay to occur in other ways, typically suddenly and with great violence. The result is premature detonation of nuclear weapons if this is desired. The field also causes the premature decay of charged and neutral particles, acting as a defensive screen against particle accelerators and meson guns. A nuclear interaction screen reduces damage from nuclear weapons and particle accelerators (including meson guns) by 8D.
Proton Screen	A proton screen causes the decay of antimatter in either a safe or supremely dangerous manner. It can render antimatter weapons or power supplies inert, or detonate them. The same technology is used for containment in antimatter-based power systems. The field can only be projected over a short distance, making it impossible to detonate the power plant of a hostile ship unless it is extremely close. A proton screen reduces the damage done by antimatter weapons by 8D.
Stasis Field	Stasis fields can be used as defences, for example by 'freezing' an incoming object relative to the rest of the universe. This would allow a defensive response to be made or the target to move out of the way. It is not possible to interact with an object in stasis in any way. Stasis fields are also used to preserve objects and people for an indefinite time.
Disintegrator Screen	A disintegrator screen is designed to protect against disintegrator weapons. Rather than surrounding the defended ship or installation, the screen runs through its structure and counteracts the disintegrator effect. To overcome a starship-scale disintegrator screen the attacker must succeed in a Formidable (14+) Gunner check, with each dice of damage granting an additional DM+1. If successful, full damage is taken by the target.

POWER SYSTEMS

Most Ancients installations and starships use antimatter-based power systems. However, these still obey the laws of thermodynamics; they cannot create energy that was not there previously. Antimatter systems are a convenient way of storing energy, however. The usual method is to create extremely dense 'heavy' antimatter particles and hold them in stasis. When energy is needed one of the particles is made to decay at a rate determined by a proton screen. This liberates vast quantities of energy at whatever rate the user wants. Naturally, it is an extremely dangerous process. If the fields are breached the resulting matter/antimatter explosion will result in a destructive release – an explosion of unimaginable power. The Ancients were confident in their technology, however, and used it for everything from starships to portable batteries.

The energy held in these systems has to come from somewhere. Two sources are commonly used. One is a star, whose emissions are collected and used to power an antimatter-generation plant. Alternatively, gravitational induction can be used. In the same manner as a conductor moving in a magnetic field will generate electricity, a device of exotic composition can be moved in a gravitational field to induce a current. Most installations have such devices constantly operating, harvesting the gravitational energy of the planet they are built on. It is not clear what the long-term effects of this might be. Ships can generate energy in a similar way, making a high-speed flyby of a powerful gravitational field to charge their gravitic generators. These then transfer their energy into a storage medium such as an antimatter power plant.

WEAPONS

Large-scale weapons are used to arm starships or defend installations. For the most part they depend on the same technologies as the force fields used by the Ancients. Some weapons are more effective than others and their use depends as much on preference as the expected defences available to the target. In addition to the following direct-harm weapons the Ancients were fond of using secondary effects. For example, a psionic attack intended to turn a ship's crew against one another might defeat a heavily shielded starship that could shrug off a salvo of antimatter missiles.

Another example of this semi-indirect approach is the teleporter-planetbuster. A disintegrator-shielded pod is dropped from orbit, falling almost to the planetary surface and building up a large amount of kinetic energy as a result of gravity. When close, the outer teleporter ring detaches and the rest of the device falls through it, teleporting the weapon back to the top of the gravity well where it will gain yet more kinetic energy in its fall. After several repetitions the projectile is allowed to crash into the planetary surface, causing a massive release of energy and the total destruction of everything around. Whilst lacking the elegance of a particle beam these weapons can get though some defences by the application of brute force.

Ancients Large-Scale Weapons

Device	Notes
Antimatter Bomb	Antimatter bombs are used as missile warheads but can be delivered by a variety of means. One favoured trick is to teleport a bomb onto an unshielded ship.
Antimatter Cloud	An antimatter cloud is created by scattering small stasis-field pods containing antimatter, then releasing the contents. It is not a subtle or precise weapon, relying on interactions with the matter of the target to create a series of matter/antimatter annihilation events which release immense energy.
Particle Pulse	Similar in concept to the crude particle accelerators used by the people of Charted Space, a particle pulse is extremely intense by comparison. Equivalents to the standard particle accelerator and meson gun were used by different Ancients factions.
Electrochemical Interference Device	Used under a variety of names, an electrochemical interference device is a large-scale anti-personnel weapon which interferes with the electrochemical processes of living tissue. Effects range from disorientation to complete shutdown of all processes such as heartbeat, respiration and the autonomic nervous system. Most humans who witnessed such an attack might refer to this weapon as a deathray.
Disintegrator	Disintegrators interfere with the strong and weak nuclear forces, causing the bonds between molecules to fall apart. Matter breaks down into its constituent particles, essentially disintegrating.
Annihilator	A more destructive form of the disintegrator possessed by some Ancients, an annihilator releases the energy of the disintegration process creating a secondary explosion. This does not change the outcome for the target – there is no more complete destruction than disintegration – but it does pose a threat to targets nearby.
Temporal Probability Weapon	One of the most advanced weapons available to the Ancients, the temporal probability weapon is rather unpredictable but can be immensely destructive. It was designed as an ultra-long-range starship combat weapon to get around the targeting difficulties caused by sensor lag. Emissions from a starship several light-minutes away are normally useless for targeting purposes as the vessel will have moved a great deal. However, the temporal probability weapon can hit the target where it was at the time of the emissions. In complete defiance of causality, it can shoot into the past. This is discussed in more detail on page 27.

TELEPORTERS

Non-psionic teleportation is one of the Ancients' greatest achievements. It allows the movement of people and objects over vast distances in zero time. This violates the concept of causality but the fact of the matter is that causality is the invention of primitive people who do not understand space-time, and in any case the Ancients do not care about trivialities like cosmic laws. If the universe wants to enforce its rules, let it try.

Teleporters are difficult and time-consuming to create, increasing exponentially with size. They take the form of a ring or circular platform linked to others created at the same time. Additional teleportation pads can be later added to a network but this is even more time-consuming. Once linked, which has to be done in physical proximity, the pads can be taken anywhere. Once the pads are activated anything placed on one pad vanishes and reappears on one of the others.

The need to physically transport teleporter pads to their destination makes setting up a network a lengthy business. A ship might be sent hundreds of parsecs to carry the pad but once this is done it is possible to get back in an instant. The disruption or destruction of teleporter networks was a strategic aim of most factions in the Final War. It is possible to teleport in and out of pocket universes but a starship in jump is completely cut off. Teleportation in or out of the jump field is impossible.

Teleportation is subject to the laws of conservation of energy but these effects are compensated for by the device if it is properly set up. If it were not, whatever arrives on the teleporter pad would retain its kinetic energy from the movement of wherever it came from. This might be the spin of a planet or the momentum of a starship. Either way, the new arrival would hurtle off the pad and inevitably be destroyed. Likewise, a change in altitude involves a change in potential energy due to gravity. This has to go somewhere but the teleporter shunts it off or supplies enough to compensate. If it did not the object would be heated to incredible temperatures or robbed of its internal energy to the point of reaching absolute zero. This can be done deliberately and a teleporter could be mis-calibrated to become a weapon of sorts.

POCKET UNIVERSES

The creation of pocket universes may have been a by-product of jump drive or teleporter technology. However it came about, pocket universe technology allows an Ancient to create a fortress that can only be entered by those who have the correct equipment and know of its location. The usual technique is to set up several teleporters at key points, allowing easy access. If control over these is lost, intruders might get in or occupants might become trapped.

Pocket universes are stable once created, keyed to a single location in the macro universe. This can be altered, with great difficulty, but a pocket universe must have an anchor point. It is possible to move in and out through this point, which is usually but not always an area of deep space. The equipment required to detect an entry point and make use of it is extremely specialised. A variant of this device can be used to make a hostile entry into the pocket universe and possibly to collapse one.

Pocket universes are typically about the size of a star system. Anything heading out beyond the heliopause finds itself heading back in from a point exactly opposite, unless it encounters the attachment point and has suitable equipment to break out. It may not be possible to create a larger pocket universe but it is definitely possible to make a smaller one. It would, in theory, be possible to create a house whose rooms were each a separate pocket universe connected by teleporters. In this case the walls of the chambers would be the outer edges of the universe.

TEMPORAL DISLOCATION DEVICES AND TIME PHYSICS

Most people think in terms of three dimensions, by which they mean the physical distances represented by the X, Y and Z axes. This allows a good model of the universe to be created in which the position of an object can be pinpointed with great accuracy at any given moment. Some add a 'fourth dimension' of time, allowing an object to be pinpointed in space and also by when it was at that location. This concept is well understood at standard Tech Levels; a ship's gunner tries to create a firing solution by figuring out where the target is going to be at the time the shot arrives.

The gunner is, in effect, firing into the future – in the sense that they are aiming for a place the target will be after a duration determined by the speed of the projectile. Of course, the gunner cannot be sure the target will not change direction after the shot is launched; the time element is immutable and therefore the whole process can be modelled using standard physics. If the gunner was somehow able to control the projectile's progress on the time axis in the same way a missile can be steered in flight, some of the variables might be eliminated. It would now be possible to determine when the weapon arrived at the target point as well as where that point was. This can be done very crudely by altering the speed of a missile in flight but accuracy requires information which is not usually available at the sort of distances over which space combat is generally fought. Energy weapons, constrained by the speed of light and other physical limitations, cannot vary their arrival time at all.

It is theorised by some that there is more than one time axis; perhaps three in the same way that physical objects have length, breadth and height. If this is so, we perceive the 'forward and back' time axis but not the others. These 'X dimensions' are thought to be important in the creation of pocket universes and may have implications far beyond the understanding of Imperial science. Temporal physics is an attempt to understand and make use of these other time axes but so far only experimental devices have been created. Among these was what might today be called a temporal dislocation device, or TDD. It proved extremely destructive and not much good for anything else, so naturally it was weaponised. Temporal physics was never mastered, even by Yaskoydray, but this device represents a start. It may be that the principles rather crudely put into practice in this device might someday produce a functional time machine.

In the meantime this extremely exotic weapon was recognised as a way to outdo disintegrators and annihilators in terms of ridiculous overkill. Rather than disperse the target's constituent particles in space, a TDD causes them to be dispersed along the time axis. A TDD can be used to attack a target that is in a different 'time location' or to disperse an object at random along the time axis. In practice this means that it is possible to fire the TDD into the past and hit a target known to have been there. To return to the concept of the starship gunner, if they know where the target was at a certain point in time it can be attacked when it was there. Instead of firing at a predicted future location the gunner locks onto a known past one. A TDD can also be fired at a target which is currently present.

The effect of a TDD discharge is total destruction and dispersion through a period of time. This makes it unlikely that even wreckage will ever be found, which may account for ship disappearances. It can also have other effects, which are entirely unpredictable. The common understanding of space-time suggests that movement of the galaxy and everything in it would scatter the particles over a large physical area but for unknown reasons this does not happen. Instead of operating on an absolute frame of reference the TDD appears to create a localised frame of reference relative to the physical position of the target – or perhaps the weapon – in the present, and to extend that frame of reference into the past and future. This is a distortion of the universe in a previously unimaginable level and may be related to the process of creating pocket universes.

One side effect of the temporally extended physical frame of reference is that other objects, which have occupied the same point in space at a different time, might encounter the periphery of the effect. There are those who wonder if anomalies like the Abyss Rift in the Spinward Marches might not be the after (or before?) effect of a TDD weapon discharge.

PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY

Personal technology varies as much as large-scale weapons. Most of the Ancients use similar devices as a result of ergonomics. The most convenient technologies and designs are common among the Ancients, with a few having personal preferences. This does not mean that all devices are the same, however. Power, additional features, range and other factors can all vary considerably.

Small Ancients devices typically store power throughout their structure rather than in a specifically located battery. This is replenished simply by being aboard a ship or in an installation using a form of broadcast power. The device will draw energy automatically, topping off its charge at every opportunity. Some devices can remain functional in a powered-down state for millennia and have effectively unlimited charge. Those with greater output may require recharging after only a few uses.

Personal devices and equipment are usually either worn items or handheld. Even a powerful psionic might enjoy making a grand gesture with a staff or tapping a bracelet to activate its function. However, most devices are telepathically triggered and the physical component is not usually necessary. Depending on who made them, devices can take almost any form. Some Ancients favoured gem-like objects for various functions, embedding them in wristbands or attaching them to regalia for their favoured servitors. The functions described here can be housed in almost any object, however.

INVESTIGATING AND ATTUNING A DEVICE

Anyone who can telepathically command a device can tell what the function of a given gem will be, at least in general terms. This is automatic if the individual is within a few metres of the device and aware of its presence – essentially the item is psionically interrogated as to its function. If the device is in the possession of someone with a telepathic shield it can only be interrogated upon successfully penetrating the shield.

Devices must be attuned before they can be used, a conscious action taking a few seconds; the equivalent of a Major Action in combat. A device whose operator dies becomes unattuned and can be attuned by anyone capable of commanding it unless some form of security is in place. If the operator is still attuned the new owner must take possession of the device. This is a form of psionic combat, fought between the device and the new owner. A device has a psionic strength which must be overcome in order to break the old attunement. Most devices have a curator who can reassign attunement at will, allowing them to be passed between members of an entourage, or attuned to more than one potential operator.

The PSI strength of a device determines how hard it is to attune, along with factors including range, precision and the like. There are no hard-and-fast rules about exactly what PSI strength equates to what range, largely due to the complex and highly individual way these devices are made. However, a PSI 4 device will be noticeably less effective than a PSI 6 device and so on.

The skill and PSI power of the maker will determine the PSI strength of a device, modified by how long was taken over it. Simple devices can be bashed out in a few days by almost any psionic crafter, whilst more powerful ones take longer and involve large numbers of supporters who concentrate their efforts in a manner akin to performing a religious ritual. Few Ancients would be willing to waste a great deal of time on basic items to be distributed to lowly servitors so they are usually quite weak. Items for the Ancient's own use would be worth investing years of rituals performed by thousands of crafters and will be far above the level of those issued to servitors.

PSI Strength is normally 1D for minor items such as function gems or weapons, 2D for more powerful items and 3D or more for major systems such as the environment controls for a base. To this is added the PSI DM of the creator. To break an attunement a new operator must succeed in a telepathic 'attack' on the device, with its PSI as a negative DM to the attack. Success inflicts 1D damage on the PSI of the device, plus the attacker's PSI DM and Telepathy skill level. Once the device's PSI score is reduced to zero it is de-attuned and can be reattuned with another Major Action. PSI regenerates, usually at the rate of one point per round. This is often higher for more important systems and devices, which not only increases their capabilities but also makes it harder for an outsider to de-attune them.

FUNCTION GEMS

One design favoured by many Ancients is a small gem-like construction of complex molecular form. Typically, these react to heat and light conditions, and to different people as well. They may change colour, or even glow, and might feel warm or cold depending on who is handling them. Most function gems are very basic, with just one function available. These are typically produced by entry-level psionic crafters with a low PSI and skill level, having a PSI score of 1D+1.

Data Gathering and Storage: Data gems are intended to hold information. Much of this is in the form of an encyclopaedia, telepathically accessed when needed. The gem will also record what is going on around it and can be set to automatically transfer that information to a central archive once within range. This means that the Ancients have a near-complete record of everything said and done in the presence of their servitors. Most of this is sufficiently mundane that dedicated servitors are assigned to search for anything of interest. A data storage gem could be used as an intelligence gathering or reconnaissance asset if mounted on a drone and given a means to transmit information back to its operator. This information gathering function is the equivalent of a full-spectrum passive sensor array with a range out to about 20 metres per point of PSI and a limited active sensor array with about half that range.

Device Control: Device control gems are specialist items, in that they typically have only one function. They may be keyed to a single device, such as a starship, acting as a security measure which will lock out controls unless the gem is placed in its receptacle. Others control a variety of devices either by being placed in a receptacle, or remotely over a distance of a few hundred metres. Control signals are artificial-psionic and cannot be detected by conventional sensors. A more advanced and complex control gem might be used to give a trusted servitor command over an entire installation's systems.

Personal Shield, Disintegrator: This personal protection device defends against disintegrator weapons. This is an all-or-nothing prospect; either the target is successfully protected or they are completely vulnerable. The power of the protection field is based upon the PSI of the device.

Disintegrator Shield Power

PSI Score	Protection Threshold	Failure Probability
1–3	7+	6-
4–6	6+	5-
7–9	5+	4-
10–12	4+	3-
13–15	3+	2-
16+	2+	0

When a shielded target is struck with a disintegrator weapon, roll 2D. If the result is equal to or higher than the Protection Threshold the attack is nullified. If the result is lower, the shield collapses and will not function for 2D minutes. If this happens, roll another 2D. If the result is equal to or lower than the Failure Probability of the device, it ceases to function. In some cases devices have been known to explode or release energy in an uncontrolled manner upon failure. Note that the most powerful disintegrator shields have no chance of failure and never fail to protect the user. Checks are therefore unnecessary when a disintegrator is used on such an individual. Where checks are necessary, one is made separately for every disintegrator hit even if there are many in the same round. If the user is standing in a disintegrator field, checks are made every round. It is not possible to have multiple disintegrator shields up at once but an individual may carry more than one and activate a replacement if their current shield is disabled as a Major Action.

Personal Shield, Energy: An energy shield projects a field which absorbs and dissipates energy weapons fire. It has no effect on dangerous radiation or disintegrator weapons but will absorb and dissipate focused energy such as lasers and microwave beams. The shield has a maximum Protection Threshold equal to twice its PSI. Any energy weapon striking the shield which does equal to or less than the Protection Threshold is fully absorbed. A hit for a greater amount lets half of the remaining damage through and permanently reduces the device's PSI by -1. When this reaches 0 the gem begins to crumble into dust.

Personal Shield, Kinetic: A kinetic shield protects against impacts including projectiles, falls and hand weapons. Its Protection Threshold is twice its PSI. Hits for this amount of damage or less are fully absorbed. Greater damage penetrates the shield completely. The shield's PSI is permanently reduced by -1 every time any damage is absorbed by it.

Personal Shield, Psionic: Psi shield devices are used to give protection to those with no or weak psionic shields. They are normally set up such that a designated individual or group can bypass the shield, allowing a servitor-leader to psionically punish underlings without resistance. A psi shield functions as the Shield power on page 231 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

Stealth, Psionic: Psionic stealth devices attempt to make the user invisible to anyone without a mental shield and also to nullify detection using psionics. For every three points of PSI the psionic stealth device provides DM-1 on attempts to detect, track or target the user by psionic means. This also applies against attack rolls from psionically targeted weapons. A typical basic device has a PSI of 1D+1, so the DM will be -1 or -2 in most cases but more powerful versions do exist. The psionic invisibility feature is sometimes but not always combined with an energy control capability, rendering the user invisible to thermal and movement-based sensor systems but drains the device's power quickly; PSI drops -1 point per round. At 0 the device becomes inert for 2D minutes, regaining its full PSI at the end of that time.

WEAPONS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT

Plasma weapons are favoured for guards and servitors but a variety of other weaponry is available if necessary. Some devices have weapon functions built in despite not being primarily intended for combat. In many cases, it is obvious that modern Droyne weaponry was derived from concepts behind Ancients technology. In general, the armament issued to servitors of the Ancients was intended for fighting non-Ancients. Vastly more powerful than anything they were likely to encounter, this weaponry could still be neutralised by standard defences. In the event where servitors were to fight the forces of another possessing such technology, they would have to work around this problem. Some chose to develop exotic or extremely powerful equipment whilst others attempted to circumvent advanced protection by using extremely simple means of attack. An Ancient who had expended enormous effort to block high-energy particle beams and disintegrators might have forgotten to protect against knives or the teeth of an engineered weapon-creature.

BODY ARMOUR

The body armour used by warriors of the Ancients varies considerably according to preferences and available technologies. One common variant is switchable between clothing and armour. Under normal circumstances the garment looks like clothing – which may be fabulously decorated of course – and provides a little protection. A psionic command causes the material to change its nature, becoming more resilient but less comfortable to wear. For non-combatants Protection +4 in non-combat mode and Protection +8 when deployed as armour is typical. Combatants will receive a suit which provides Protection +6 normally and Protection +14 when deployed. In addition, it is common to build in kinetic, energy and disintegrator shields. If the wearer has other shields, those fitted to the armour will deploy last. Thus someone wearing a separate disintegrator shield will use that first, with the less easily replaced armour component deployed as a last resort.

DISINTEGRATOR CHARGE

A disintegrator charge resembles a gorgeously decorated short tube, not dissimilar to grenades used by primitive militaries. It can be placed as a trap and detonated psionically or primed and thrown. Detonation can be triggered by the user or set to occur after a suitable delay, creating a disintegration field one to six metres in radius, which will completely destroy anything within it. Detonation radius can be controlled by the user.

PLASMA RIFLE

The plasma weapons issued to troops serving an Ancient are advanced by standards of the modern era and serve as both offensive and defensive weapons. Kinetic, energy and disintegrator shields are built into the weapon, providing the user with protection even if they are in the open. This near-invulnerability to the weapons of primitives makes some forces rather arrogant. Warriors are likely to advance in a neat line, evenly spaced, firing as they go rather than dispersing and using cover. They will do so once they take significant casualties but there is an element of theatre to the way a battle is conducted. Ancients would rather lose a few warriors than come down to the level of primitives, nervously dodging between positions.

The weapon is constructed as a single unit and is psionically triggered. Its internal reserve provides enough power for 200 discharges after which the rifle is recharged by placing it in a dedicated repair/recharge port at an installation or aboard a ship. Shield gems are also repaired or replaced at this time. Upon telepathic command, the tip of the weapon emits a plasma cutting arc which can be used as a bayonet. The user can determine the damage done by the weapon, setting it anywhere between 1D and 10D. The bayonet does 4D and is not variable.

SHIMMERSUIT

Shimmersuits are an all-body covering which get their name from the iridescent sheen of the fabric. They are made from an elastic material which stretches to accommodate a wide range of wearers. Each suit includes a transparent facemask and gloves that link into the suit to form a perfect seal. An oxygen regenerator in the belt provides up to eight hours of oxygen and the suit can resist pressure up to 1,000 atmospheres as well as extremes of radiation.

As armour, shimmersuits completely absorb all laser attacks harmlessly, while all other attacks are reduced to ¼ normal damage, rounding down. The wearer of a shimmersuit gains STR +4 and DEX +4.

STAFF OF OFFICE

Issued to some important servitors, a staff of office is typically long enough to reach the intended user's shoulder. Most are slim for much of their length, with asymmetric bulges at intervals. A typical staff of office projects a disintegrator shield and an energy shield, and acts as a psionic focus device. This can either reduce the cost of performing a psionic action by 25%, or increase the strength of an attack by 25% – for every four points of PSI used in an offensive action, one more is added by the focus device. Some staffs also mount a plasma cutter at one end. This is not really for use as a melee weapon, although it could be used as such. It is more to permit dramatic gestures like destroying an object or a faithless minion. The cutter does 4D damage if used as a weapon.

REGALIA

Senior servitors are gifted with a set of regalia which befits their status. This is extremely ornate, usually with multiple functions built in. Energy, disintegrator and kinetic shields are standard, along with data storage gems and sometimes additional functions. A grav harness, similar to a grav belt, may be fitted. If so, it is unobtrusive and looks like part of the decoration. The harness has an additional function; it can be set to repel anyone coming close. This is not sufficient to deflect a bullet but will make anyone approaching the

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Shimmersuit	Special	25	600	1	—	None

wearer feel slight resistance out to about five metres, increasing rapidly as the wearer gets closer. This can be used to push a crowd aside or to shove people out of the way and more subtly to make it difficult to approach such magnificence.

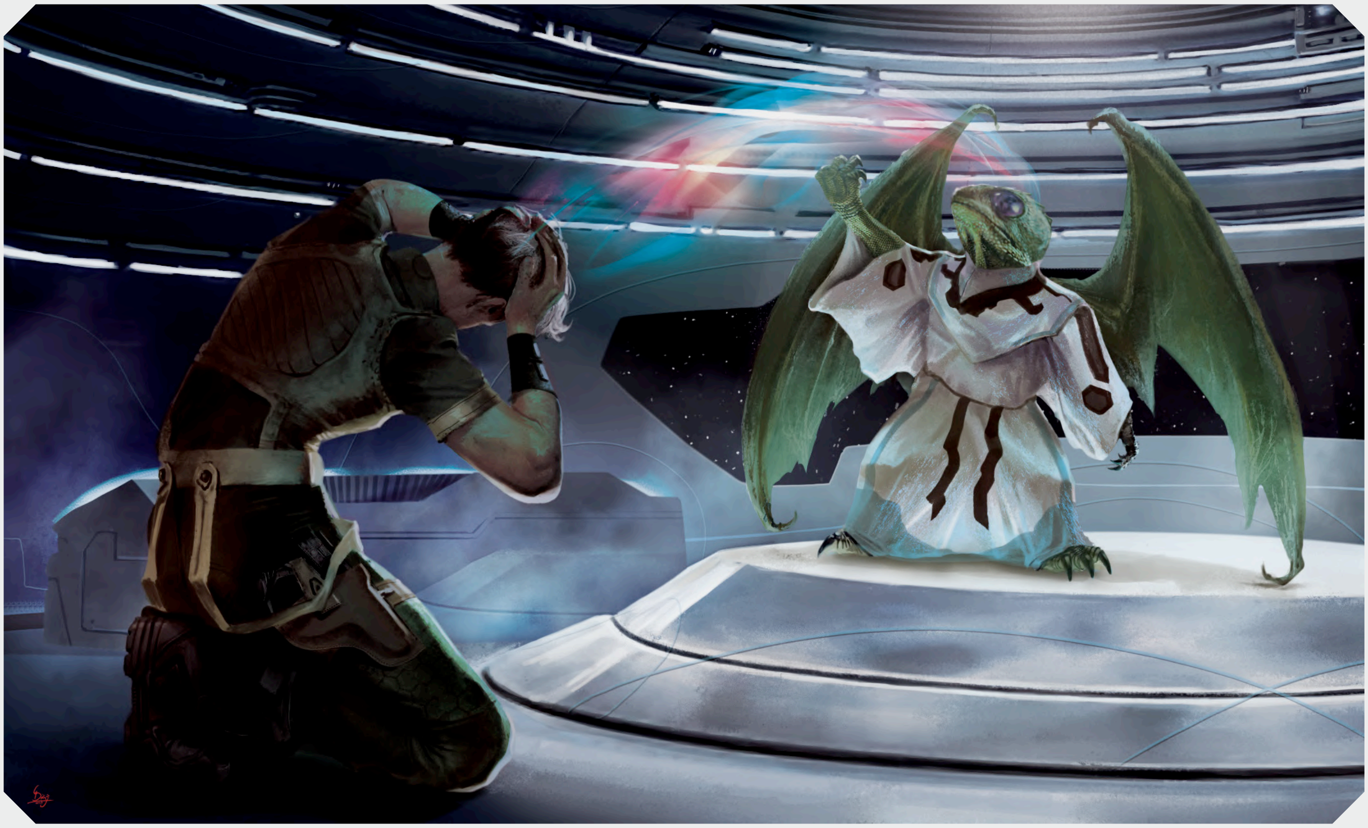
The field can be controlled telepathically and focused on one person in a group. It can deliver a blow doing 2D damage and/or a shove equivalent to STR 15 which may push someone off balance or pick them up off the ground. Avoiding being knocked about requires a Difficult (10+) DEX check. The grav effect will work on a psionically shielded person whereas telekinesis would have to overcome their resistance.

SPECIAL TALENTS

The Ancients, and some of their uplifted servitors, were far above the level of ordinary people in many ways. The most basic of these are unlimited skill levels and higher characteristic limits. The physical characteristics (STR, DEX, END) are can rise to twice their normal species maximum and even then there are possible exceptions that go further. It is not likely an Ancient would want to possess incredible physical strength – that is what servitors are for – but in theory an Ancient could modify someone or even their own body to far beyond species norms. Once any physical characteristic becomes higher than the species maximum the changes made to the subject's body become very apparent. For example, a Droyne super-warrior with STR and END 25 would be a grotesque caricature of its normal form.

INT and EDU can be increased more or less indefinitely without obvious physical changes, although the subject's brain would be a marvel to scientists. Increases in EDU represent the ability to recall everything the subject has ever learned and make logical inferences based upon that information. It is necessary to feed this repository with knowledge – as much as possible, as often as possible – and this can become an obsession in some subjects. PSI can also be increased indefinitely.

Uplifted subjects and the Ancients themselves can also develop special abilities. Some of these can be represented by skills. For example, a subject might gain an insight into strategy and decision-making that parallels formal training in Tactics, despite them having never studied the subject. Other special talents are additional psionic abilities or specific unusual capabilities. Some of these might possibly be paralleled elsewhere in the cosmos but the Ancients have access to all of them.



PSIONIC DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

At various points in the campaign the Travellers will be drawn into a form of combat or threat best described as a psionic nightmare. Against normal people this is merely a cruel way to torment them to death or madness but a psionically adept individual can fight back. A less unpleasant version of the same power can be used to convey information.

Droyne artworks often incorporate a 'dream trigger' in their patterns. For those sensitive to the effect, this is a flawless way to transmit information. Most Droyne communities have the ability to create and 'read' these patterns, ensuring the Oytrip's members are constantly reminded of their history and part in the well-being of the Oytrip. Other species are for the most part not sensitive to the effect, with a small number of individuals who are partially sensitive. This is unfortunate, since the information transfer will take on a nightmarish quality which can drive the observer quite mad.

Information transfer takes the form of a 'psionic dream' in which the recipient's mind conjures images and scenes. These draw heavily on the recipient's memories and subconscious and it may be that this is what causes adverse effects. The differences in culture and mindset between provider and recipient cause distortion of information and disorientation in the receiver. Often this is short-term but sometimes it can be permanent. Sanity is gradually worn down by frightening visions and confusion about what is real and what is not.

Information transfer is not a neat table of facts and numbers. Instead, the recipient experiences a waking dream in which they see events unfold, and from this they draw inferences. When the recipient's mindset and preconceptions closely match those of the creator of trigger artwork or provider of information the transfer is harmless and highly productive. For others, the process is more complex.

Sensitivity to psionic trigger artworks is unknown in species never influenced by the Ancients, at least among non-psionic individuals. Trained psions may be able to acquire the ability. Thus K'kree, Aslan, Hivers, pure-blood Solomani and many Minor Races see only a strange pattern whose aesthetics may or may not be pleasing. In those species subject to tampering by the Ancients, one in tens of hundreds of thousands will be partially receptive.

As a result of their uplift process the Travellers are also partially receptive and may be able to tune this ability over time. Whenever the Travellers encounter a psionic trigger artwork or someone tries to present them with information they must pass an Average (8+) PSI check. There are no adverse modifiers if the information is coming from someone of the same culture and general background. However, differences in mindset and worldview can impose difficulties in interpretation.

Travellers who are on certain uplift paths can improve their ability to interpret these dreams. The Referee may also permit a reduction in the negative DM as the Travellers become more familiar with certain alien cultures. If the Travellers actively study Droyne culture, for example, they may eventually become familiar enough that the Droyne are considered a significantly (as opposed to very) different mindset. Immersion in Droyne culture – if that is possible at all – for a period of several years would allow a Traveller to think more or less like a Droyne and eliminate the DM altogether.

Travellers with the Impose ability (see page 45) can send information to others in this manner and also plunge their victim into a psionic nightmare. Certain trigger artworks can also do this, although their creation is an art known only to a few trusted servitors of the Ancients. More commonly, nightmares are triggered to confuse or harm enemies, or as punishment for overly wilful servitors.

A psionic nightmare can be imposed on any non-shielded person so long as an Average (8+) Impose check is made. To push one through a shield, an opposed PSI check is necessary, using the attacker's Impose level and the defender's Telepathy. The maximum kind of nightmare that can be imposed is determined by the Effect of this check. An Imposed information transfer might also cause a nightmare in an unwilling or unreceptive subject. Effect -6 or worse imposes a nightmare. This will usually be of a minor sort but could become serious if the recipient fails to interpret the situation correctly.

A nightmare takes the form of one or more incidents, each of which plays out over one combat round but could seem like months or years in the target's mind. Their general nature is determined by the individual

Psionic Trigger Interpretation

Factor	Example	DM
Significantly different mindset	A modern human trying to figure out a trigger-dream inspired by a modern Vargr.	-3
Very different mindset	A modern human trying to figure out as trigger-dream inspired by a modern Droyne.	-6
Extremely different mindset	A modern human trying to figure out as trigger-dream inspired by people from the time of the Ancients.	-9
Entirely different mindset	A modern human trying to figure out a trigger-dream inspired by a completely unknown species or mind, such as a sentient ocean or a gas giant dwelling creature.	-12

imposing the nightmare. This can be almost anything the imposer chooses and in some cases the target's own memories and fears are used to create the most disturbing of nightmares. One incident can be imposed for every point of Impose. At each incident the target must make a check to determine how well they are dealing with the imaginary situation. For those not psionically trained this is unlikely to be very good. In this case a straight 2D check is made, whereas those who do have psionic training may make a PSI check with their Interpret level (see page 45) as a DM. The Effect of these checks is cumulative across all incidents within the nightmare and will determine its outcome. All checks are Difficult (10+).

A nightmare imposed by a failed interpretation of information will be passive in nature, as will one where the imposer starts it and then moves on to some other attack. In this case, the target makes checks unopposed. An active nightmare is one in which the imposer deliberately guides the nightmare and tries to make it as bad as possible. In this case the target's check is subject to a negative DM equal to the attacker's Interpret. An active nightmare can be terminated at any time by the imposer, with one exception. If the check has a negative Effect of -6 or worse another incident takes place. This can cause a nightmare to go on indefinitely, or at least until the target goes mad and dies.

In an opposed nightmare, it is possible for the intended victim to benefit. A positive Effect on the check permits the victim to choose whether the nightmare continues, essentially trapping the imposer in their own nightmare. The imposer can terminate the nightmare in any round where the victim has a negative Effect, or can rip themselves out by succeeding in a Difficult (10+) Impose check with the victim's Interpret level as a negative DM. It is quite possible for someone to lower their psi shield and let an enemy impose a nightmare, then devour their mind. More commonly, the victim will see fragments of thoughts and memories which may yield useful information. A victim who emerges from a nightmare with Effect 6+ gains useful information, whilst Effect 1–5 results in only fragmentary images. In the rare instance where someone manages to turn the tables on an aggressor and gains Effect 13+ they may choose to drag detailed information of the aggressor – or just kill them.

The total Effect from each incident determines the outcome of the nightmare situation.

13+ COMPLETE DOMINANCE

The intended victim has somehow managed to trap the aggressor in their own nightmare and taken control of it. They may demand D3+3 pieces of significant information, each in the form of asking a question in no more than 10 words, or can impose madness or death.

6 TO 12 DOMINANCE

The intended victim has gained control over the nightmare. They may demand D3 pieces of significant information, each in the form of asking a question in no more than 10 words.

1 TO 5 PARTIAL DOMINANCE

The intended victim has escaped the nightmare and probably given the attacker a real fright. They will be given some pieces of fragmentary information, or images that make no sense at the time but will be recognised later in the campaign. Some of this information might be useful, perhaps showing how to get a particular door open or allowing the Traveller to recognise a minion of one of their enemies despite never seeing them in person before. One piece of information per point of Effect is a good rule of thumb.

0 DISORIENTING
The victim emerges from the nightmare confused and disorientated. This imposes DM-2 on all actions taken over the next 2D combat rounds, after which the effect is thrown off.

-1 TO -3 UNSETTLING
The victim suffers the effect of a disorienting nightmare and in addition has a persistent sense of dread about something connected with the nightmare. For the next 2D hours they suffer DM-1 on all actions taken in a particular field. This might be combat, shipboard operations, academic pursuits such as plotting a jump course, or translating an alien book.

-4 TO -6 FRIGHTENING
The victim emerges shaking and terrified. They are disorientated for 4D+6 rounds and have a persistent sense of dread about a particular type of endeavour or perhaps a person. This imposes DM-2 on all actions connected with the person or activity. It can result in a pilot being frightened to touch the controls and timid in their piloting actions or a Traveller collapsing in terror upon first meeting someone who resembles the subject of their nightmare. The same could apply to a place, a sound, or any other single trigger. The effect lasts 2D days.

-7 TO -9 TERRIFYING
The victim emerges limp with terror and cannot act at all for 2D rounds. They may even suffer a medical emergency such as heart palpitations. After this they are disorientated for 2D hours and have a lasting fear of a particular circumstance, individual or activity. This is permanent, imposing DM-1 on all checks connected with or in the presence of their trigger. The fear can be overcome by therapy or perhaps some cathartic event like shooting the subject of their fear in the face, performing a great feat despite their terror, or similar major events.

-10 TO -12 SANITY THREATENING
The victim suffers all the effects of a terrifying nightmare and in addition develops a serious mental condition. At its mildest this will manifest as a phobia of something connected with the nightmare and in many cases can result in a gradual descent into complete madness. Therapy may or may not help; in some cases the damage is so deep-rooted that conventional treatment is useless. Travellers should not be taken out of play in this manner but roleplaying a dangerously unstable being with super-powers could be enlightening. Other characters are at the Referee's mercy. Travellers might go on a quest to save the mind of a treasured friend but without some exotic method of counteracting the madness most victims are doomed.

-13 OR MORE: LETHAL
A psionic nightmare can be bad enough to cause someone to die of fear, or a personality could be radically altered and memories lost. This is one of the worst things that could happen to someone; they are still alive but not 'them' any more. A skilled nightmare invoker may be able to eradicate a person and reprogram their physical form to become a loyal servitor or mindless automaton.

REFEREEING NIGHTMARES
Psionic dreams and nightmares feature at various points in this campaign. The Referee can delve as deep into their actual content as seems appropriate. Some Travellers will prefer to just roll dice to resolve a nightmare but if the Travellers are receptive this can be an opportunity to roleplay some highly unusual situations. Nightmares do not have to make sense; a Traveller facing successive dream threats might imagine they are being chased by some kind of monster, then they are at a party where they spill red wine on the Duchess of Mora's clothes and are thrown into a pit filled with carnivorous sports equipment. How dark or wacky this gets is up to the Referee and the Travellers, although it is advisable to steer well clear of sensitive topics.

Incidents take place one combat round at a time, although they may seem to take much longer to play out in the nightmare. A non-psionic Traveller experiencing a nightmare is not really aware of the world around them. They will stumble about, cry out, knock things over and generally act in a distressed manner. This will make them extremely vulnerable to real-world threats. Someone with psionic training can take basic actions like ducking into cover or staggering along a corridor towards their objective. However, any checks that have to be made are subject to DM-6 until the nightmare ends.

INVOLVING THE TRAVELLERS

Wrath of the Ancients begins in medias res, with the Travellers unable to remember how they got into their situation. However, they will quickly unscramble their memories and recall the chain of events that led them here. Therefore, a certain amount of backstory is necessary. This is considerably different for new Travellers than for anyone who has played *Mysteries of the Ancients* and *Secrets of the Ancients*.

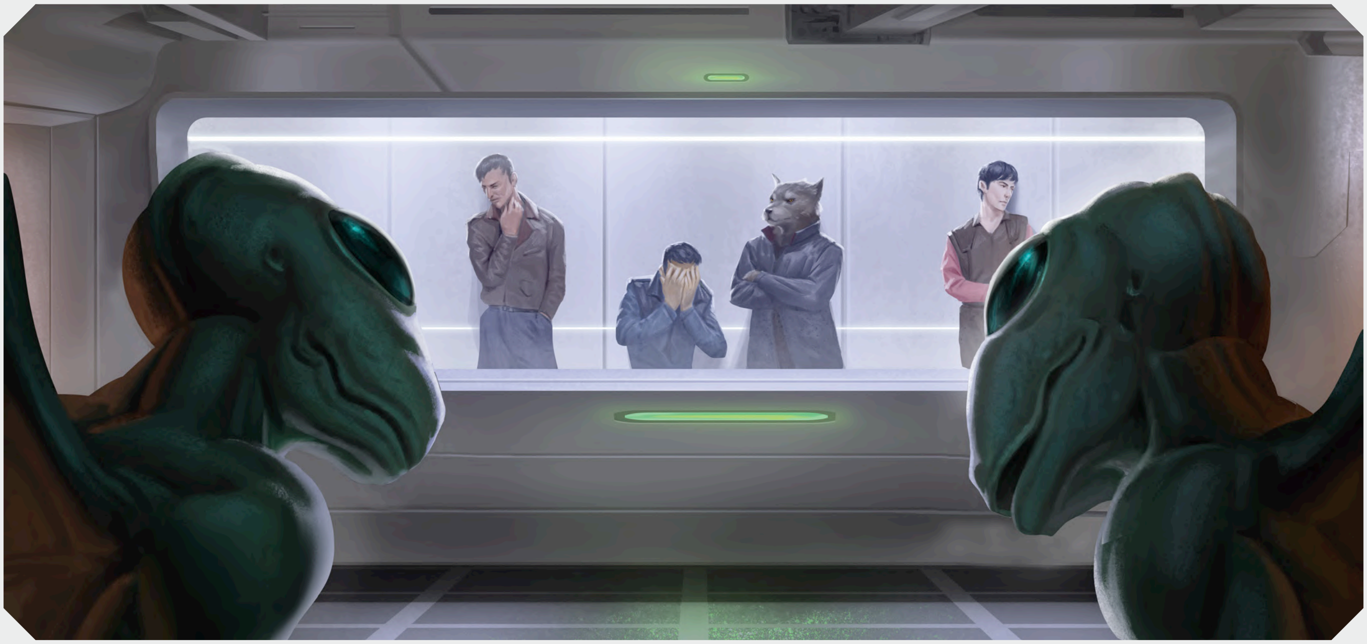
NEW TRAVELLERS

New Travellers should be created as normal. However, at some point after the end of their careers they suffer a serious mishap. Perhaps they were travelling alone or in a remote location but however it happened they were suddenly incapacitated and placed in a stasis pod. Naturally they have no memory of what happened next but were used as a test subject in the uplift process described on page 38. Most of the subjects were eliminated or still in their pods when the base at Twilight's Peak was destroyed. A few were shipped out elsewhere to be evaluated.

The vessel carrying the Travellers was ambushed en route. The Travellers do not at present know exactly what happened but their rescuers were Droyne. They were not deliberately unkind but did not care about the Travellers. Brought out of stasis in confinement they were studied for a few days then released without explanation at a backwater starport. The Travellers were given clothing and money – about Cr120000 each – but no answers to any of their questions. Since then they have been searching for answers.

Each new Traveller must decide whether they attempted to re-establish their old life and identity. If they did, the Imperial Ministry of Justice will have asked them a lot of questions but was overall sensitive and supportive. Abductions of this sort have occurred from time-to-time and any information the Travellers could offer was welcome. Travellers who went through this process get the impression that their story was believed but that the MOJ – or the people who claimed to be from the MOJ – were investigating something large and serious. These Travellers may eventually come to suspect the involvement of Omicron Division. The authorities did help in re-establishing identity documents and access to accounts, so these Travellers have their old life back.

Those who have avoided contact with the authorities have no access to former documents, possessions and accounts. They either have no identity documentation or have had to find someone who can fake one. Doing so makes it possible to travel and pass through even Class A and B starports but there is always a risk



that the fake ID will be revealed. That could lead to a process much like the one described, with the added complication that the authorities might decide to take action against the Traveller for using a false identity.

In either case, the Travellers have been through the first stages of the uplift process and are aware that something very strange is going on. Their inquiries led to an apparently chance meeting with a woman who used several different names but eventually told the Travellers to call her Mercedes. She was flying a heavily modified scout ship named *Garnette*, a vessel famous among the Ancients Hunter community, and was willing to share some information about the situation.

Mercedes has filled in the Travellers about what she knows. This is essentially the events of *Mysteries of the Ancients*, slightly garbled and lacking in details. A planet broke up, some Travellers found the manuscript of Mercedes' book Twilight's Peak and followed the clues in it. Omicron Division attacked her home and she had to flee. Her friend Blanca helped her recover *Garnette*. An invisible monster killed half a town on Callia. The Travellers found Twilight's Peak – the actual mountain, not the book – and then some Droyne dropped a planetbuster on it. Mercedes arrived in time to get a look at the aftermath but does not know what happened to the Travellers who entered the mountain.

MODIFYING THE STORY

Mercedes' story might have to be modified if the Travellers did something that contradicts it. If they destroyed *Garnette* or took it with them to their confrontation with Seven and Yaskoydray then Mercedes has a different scout ship but renamed it in honour of the old one. If the Referee feels so inclined, they can tell the tale in detail, with alterations and inaccuracies due to Mercedes' lack of first-hand observation. A few truly outrageous alterations are in order in this case – Mercedes got her information from the best sources she could but some of them are Ancients Hunter wannabees and prone to making stuff up.

She was trying to find out more when a ripple went through the Ancients Hunter networks and the few people who actually know anything started to get really concerned. Omicron Division pulled its entire combat force out of the sector and never came back. Along the way Mercedes found these new Travellers and interacted with them for a little while before suddenly rushing off to do something very urgent.

EXISTING TRAVELLERS

Travellers who have been through the previous campaigns already have a reason for being part of *Wrath of the Ancients*. The only question is what they did after the end of *Secrets of the Ancients*. The default option – which can be replaced by the Referee if the Travellers made different choices – is that after they made their escape from the Yaskoydray/Seven battle site they have been conducting relatively mundane business either on their own behalf or under orders from Seven. Activities might include:

- Checking in on a deserted installation to ensure no-one else has gained access
- Obtaining first-hand survey data of a gas giant
- Taking readings at an oddly specific point in deep space
- Waiting around for days or even weeks for orders that do not come

If the Travellers are free agents they will have been doing whatever they pleased but either way there is one certainty. Not long after the battle, all the Travellers suffered disorientation and extreme physical discomfort lasting for several hours. If they did not know it before they are sure now – their bodies and minds are changing as a result of the uplift process. They need to know what is happening and if the results are likely to be beneficial. Obtaining more information is a priority, so whatever Seven – or anyone else – wants them to be doing, the Travellers will have been searching for answers on their own behalf.

After the disorientation episode, the Travellers all shared an identical conviction that something important was located in a certain place. At first they could not figure out where that was but in the course of their travels they began to know more. This was a bit like remembering a vivid but fragmentary dream. The dream/memory led the Travellers to a cold moon where they found what they were looking for… which is where the campaign begins.

THE UPLIFT PROCESS

The uplift process the Travellers are experiencing is a little like the Droyne casteing ritual but takes place in a series of stages which can be guided. Each is begun by a telepathic command delivered by the Traveller's own mind in response to an external trigger. Normally the process would be guided by a senior servitor and the recipient shaped to the needs of an Ancient but the Travellers' actions have ensured they develop in an erratic but free manner. They do not have total control over the process or the results.

Each stage of the uplift process is accompanied by intermittent headaches, nausea, vision and hearing problems, as well as discomfort or pain throughout the body. Some changes will be obvious and may be accompanied by a need to consume a great deal of high-protein food. This is usually the case when physical alterations are taking place but regrowing part of the brain is also energy-intensive. The Travellers may be able to analyse and document their changes using equipment ranging from the totally mundane to the highly specialised. For example, an increase in muscle density may be visually obvious and will cause a change in weight whilst the development of a psionic ability may be only measurable by tracking detailed analyses of brain configuration.

STAGE 1

All Travellers have already experienced stage 1. This was the beginning of their process and was very minor. Each Traveller gains +1 to any one of DEX, END, STR or INT. In addition, they are considered to have been psionically tested and have a PSI score equal to 2D with no modifiers. The Travellers have no skills or abilities but do possess a mental shield which blocks psionic attacks and mind-reading attempts. They can operate psionically triggered equipment even if they do not have the Telepathy talent. If a Traveller already had psionic abilities, they may re-determine their PSI score and keep the higher of their existing or new value.

STAGE 2

Stage 2 occurred just after the finale of *Secrets of the Ancients* or after the Travellers were released from their stasis pods. The Travellers suffered a debilitating wave of nausea and disorientation lasting several hours, during which they saw dream-like visions of a starship crewed by Droyne. It was falling, out of control, towards a small planet or large moon shrouded in methane fog. The Traveller had a chance to grab one person and pull them to safety on a teleporter pad just before impact. There were six; a Droyne from each caste. Each Traveller can choose any of them but only one. A description of what the Droyne was doing and their general demeanour is provided under Notes. It may or may not give a clue as to what the Traveller will gain and the Referee should not provide specifics.

THE SIX PATHS

The uplift process can take the Travellers down one of six paths. They may initially think they have to follow just one but this is not entirely true. There will be opportunities to gain abilities from other paths or change which path the Traveller is on. It may even be possible to take complete control over the process and take whatever abilities the Traveller wants. At this point they are beginning to rival the Ancients in their dominance over the cosmos.

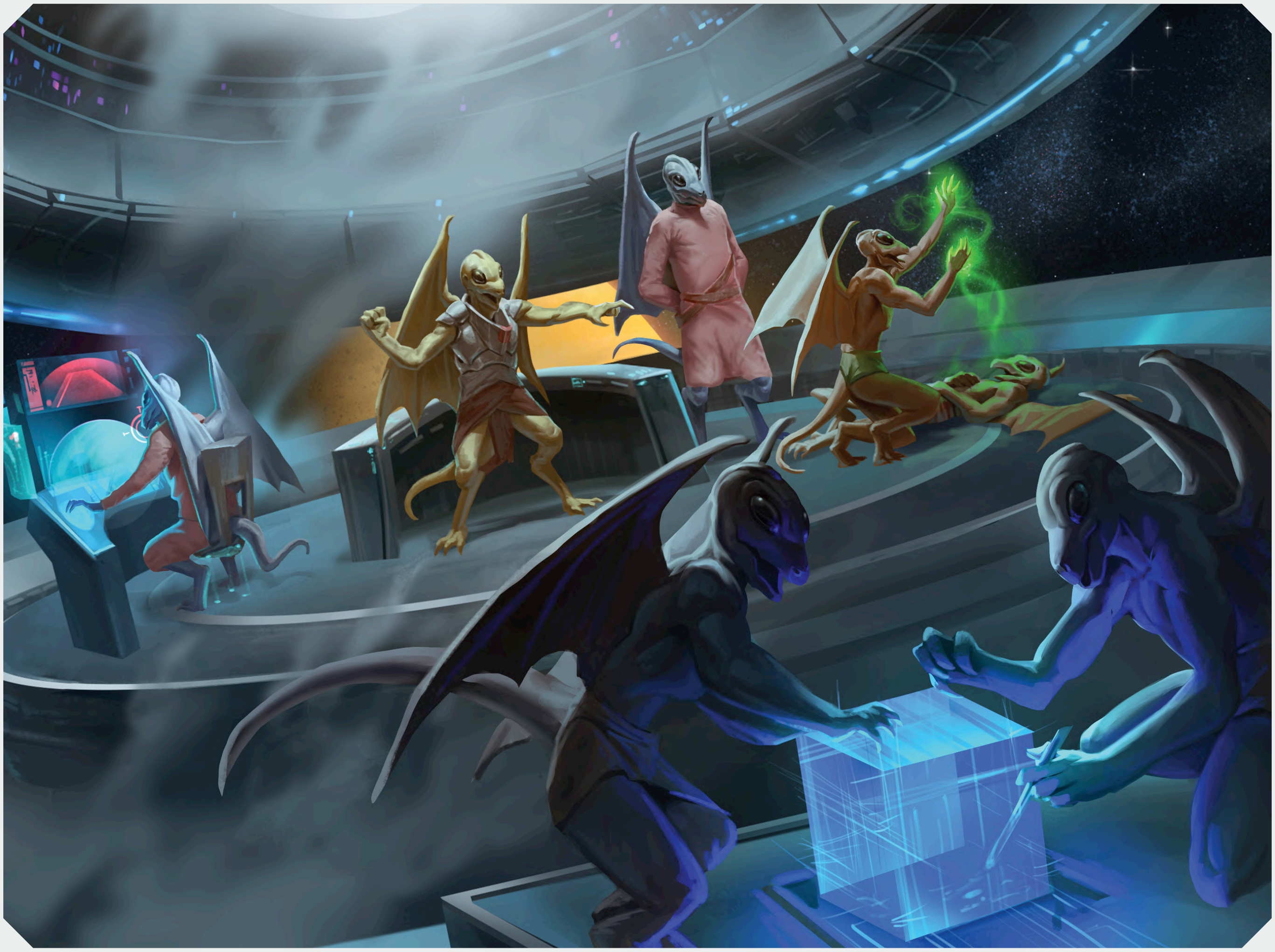
Uplift packages are gained at various points in the campaign. Normally, each Traveller will take the next package in their chosen path along with one ability chosen from the General list. Once a special ability is gained it can be increased using the General Enhancements on page 44.

THE PATH OF DOMINANCE

The Path of Dominance is all about commanding others and being a suitably impressive leader. The adherent's psionic abilities develop but more importantly Dominance leads to the ability to get others to do almost anything.

RESCUE CHOICES

Rescuee	Notes	Effect
The Leader	The Leader stands proudly in his regalia, remaining in his command platform to the last. He continues to give orders despite there being no point in anyone obeying them.	The Traveller is showing an affinity for the Path of Dominance. Gain the first uplift package from this path.
The Drone	The Drone is tending to a fallen Droyne, performing ritualistic gestures.	The Traveller is showing an affinity for the Path of Spirit. Gain the first uplift package from this path.
The Sport	The Sport is dashing from one part of the command chamber to another, passing equipment to others and briefly assisting in their tasks before moving on.	The Traveller is showing an affinity for the Path of All. Gain the first uplift package from this path.
The Technician	The Technician is at the controls, attempting to mitigate the crash or even save the ship. Holographic diagrams of the damaged vessel glimmer in the air around him.	The Traveller is showing an affinity for the Path of Knowledge. Gain the first uplift package from this path.
The Warrior	The Warrior stands beside the command podium, unmoving and waiting for orders.	The Traveller is showing an affinity for the Path of Physicality. Gain the first uplift package from this path.
The Worker	The Worker is tearing damaged components out of the pilot's console, unheeding of the sparks. A box of spares lies at his feet.	The Traveller is showing an affinity for the Path of Facilitation. Gain the first uplift package from this path.



DOMINANCE PACKAGE 1

The Traveller's thinking becomes quicker and clearer, and their telepathic capabilities increase.

INT+1, PSI +1

Skills: Leadership +1, Persuade +1, Telepathy +2
Special Abilities: Augmented Psi Shield +2, Interpret +1, Psionic Device +1

DOMINANCE PACKAGE 2

The Traveller's psionic powers increase further and they gain an increased ability to influence and dominate others.

PSI +2

Skills: Leadership +1, Persuade +1, Telepathy +2
Special Ability: Magnetic Personality +2

DOMINANCE PACKAGE 3

The Traveller's leadership abilities increase further along with their intellect and ability to recall knowledge. An instinctive understanding of what to do in any situation begins to emerge.

INT +1, EDU +1

Skills: Leadership +1, Persuade +1, Tactics (any) +1, Telepathy +1
Special Abilities: Impose +1, Punish +2

DOMINANCE PACKAGE 4

The Traveller's development continues with a further increase in telepathic capabilities.

INT +1, EDU +1, PSI +1

Skills: Tactics (any) +1, Telepathy +2
Special Abilities: Command +2, Interpret +1, Psionic Device +1

DOMINANCE PACKAGE 5

The Traveller develops new abilities and becomes an even more powerful telepath.

INT +1, EDU +1

Skills: Leadership +2, Telepathy +2
Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Mental Citadel

DOMINANCE PACKAGE 6

The Traveller's development concludes with yet more special abilities.

PSI +2

Special Abilities: Impose +1, Loyalty, Wondrous Leadership

THE PATH OF SPIRIT

The Path of Spirit leads to greater psionic strength and powers. The adherent gains access to all standard psionic abilities and becomes immensely powerful with them.

SPIRIT PACKAGE 1

The Traveller's psionic capabilities increase.

PSI +3

Skills: Awareness +1, Telepathy +1
Special Abilities: Interpret +2, Psionic Device +1, Ritual +1

SPIRIT PACKAGE 2

The Traveller's psionic powers increase further and they gain new areas of expertise.

PSI +2

Skills: Ancients Tech +1, Telekinesis +1, Telepathy +1
Special Abilities: Augmented Psi Shield +2, Impose +1

SPIRIT PACKAGE 3

The Traveller's psionic abilities increase further and become broader. They develop an instinctive understanding of how psionics work.

INT +1, PSI + 1

Skills: Clairvoyance +1, Telepathy +1
Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Psionic Device +1, Psionicology +2

SPIRIT PACKAGE 4

The Traveller gains access to or becomes more adept in the most difficult of psionic disciplines; teleportation.

PSI +2

Skills: Ancients Tech +1, Telepathy +1, Teleportation +2
Special Abilities: Impose +1, Mass Ritual +2

SPIRIT PACKAGE 5

The Traveller further increases their psionic skills.

PSI +2

Skills: Awareness +1, Telekinesis +1, Telepathy +1
Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Mental Citadel, Psionic Device +1

SPIRIT PACKAGE 6

The Traveller's development concludes with yet more special abilities.

PSI +4

Special Abilities: Destruction +2, Impose +1, Interpret +1

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

The Path of Knowledge opens up new ideas and ways of thinking. At first this is represented by wider knowledge and better recall, but the Knowledge path ultimately leads to the ability to think through to a solution for any problem at all… eventually.

KNOWLEDGE PACKAGE 1

The Traveller's intellect and mental capabilities are increased.

INT +1, EDU +1

Skills: Ancients Tech +1, Investigate +1, Jack-of-all-Trades +1, Medic +1, Telepathy +1
Special Abilities: Interpret +2, Omni-science +2, Psionic Device +2

KNOWLEDGE PACKAGE 2

The Traveller's knowledge and intellect continue to expand. They gain the ability to conduct experiments from a great distance.

INT +1, PSI +1

Skills: Ancients Tech +1, Awareness +1, Investigate +1, Jack-of-all-Trades +1
Special Abilities: Impose +1, Telesperimentation +2

KNOWLEDGE PACKAGE 3

The Traveller's intellect expands again, bringing with it the ability to think truly deep thoughts.

INT +2

Skills: Clairvoyance +1, Investigate +1, Jack-of-all-Trades +1,
Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Omni-Science + 1, Ponder +1, Psionic Device +1

KNOWLEDGE PACKAGE 4

The Traveller learns to protect their most precious possession; their mighty intellect.

Skills: Any +3, Any +2, Any +1 (these must be normal skills, not special abilities or psionic skills), Clairvoyance +1
Special Abilities: Impose +1, Mental Citadel

KNOWLEDGE PACKAGE 5

The Traveller gains a deep instinctive understanding of probability, enabling them to predict large and small events with great accuracy.

INT +1, EDU +1

Skills: Gambler +2
Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Omni-Science +1, Ponder +1, Psionic Device +1

KNOWLEDGE PACKAGE 6

The Traveller's development concludes with further increases in intellect and knowledge.

INT+1, PSI +1

Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Omni-Science +2, Ponder +1

THE PATH OF PHYSICALITY

The Path of Physicality is all about physical prowess, resilience and fighting power. At the lower end, Physicality adherents become better warriors but have rather mundane skills. At the higher levels they begin to take control over life processes.

PHYSICALITY PACKAGE 1

The Traveller's physical capabilities are enhanced, along with their resilience.

STR +2, END +2

Skills: Athletics (any) +2, Gun Combat (any) +2, Melee (any) +2
Special Abilities: Fighter +1, Psionic Device +1, Shooter +1

PHYSICALITY PACKAGE 2

The Traveller continues to develop increased physical capabilities along with an all-round improvement in physical prowess.

DEX +1, END +1

Skills: Gun Combat (any) +1, Medic +1, Melee (any) +1
Special Ability: Prowess +2

PHYSICALITY PACKAGE 3

The Traveller's body continues to develop, probably undergoing noticeable changes.

STR +1, END +1

Skills: Athletics (any) +2, Gun Combat (any) +1, Melee (any) +1
Special Ability: Resilience +2

PHYSICALITY PACKAGE 4

The Traveller's physical capabilities go beyond simply 'doing' and now include an instinctive understanding of life processes.

STR +1, DEX +1, END +1

Skills: Athletics (any) +2, Awareness +1, Medic +2
Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Life Savant +2, Psionic Device +1

PHYSICALITY PACKAGE 5

The Traveller continues to develop into a physical colossus and gain further insights into what makes living things work… and how to make them stop.

STR +1, DEX +1, END +1

Skills: Athletics (any) +2, Awareness +2
Special Abilities: Cause Death +2, Interpret +1

PHYSICALITY PACKAGE 6

The Traveller's development concludes with the ability to alter all living things.

DEX +1, END +1

Skills: Awareness +1
Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Morph +1, Prowess +1, Resilience +1

THE PATH OF FACILITATION

The Path of Facilitation is about making things happen by physical and psionic means. At the lower end, this makes the Traveller a more effective supporter and worker but later on they become capable of greater things. This path grants numerous skills, which can take the Traveller far past normal limits. These skills may not be formally taught and accredited in the usual manner; they are simply things the Traveller can now do.

FACILITATION PACKAGE 1

The Traveller's physical capabilities are increased along with a gain in skills.

DEX +1, END +1

Skills: Ancients Tech +1, Electronics (any) +2, Engineer (any) +2, Jack-of-all-Trades +1, Mechanic +2
Special Abilities: Interpret +1, Psionic Device +1, Team Effort +2

FACILITATION PACKAGE 2

The Traveller continues to develop as a physical 'doer', with additional psionic elements.

END +1, PSI +1

Skills: Awareness +1, Electronics (any) +2, Engineer (any) +2, Jack-of-all-Trades +1, Mechanic +2
Special Ability: Tireless +2

FACILITATION PACKAGE 3

The Traveller begins to develop greater psionic and mental abilities. They are no longer just a 'doer' but becoming someone who makes things happen in more abstract ways.

INT +1, PSI +1

Skills: Ancients Tech +1, Jack-of-all-Trades +1, Science (any) +2, Telekinesis +1
Special Abilities: Form +2, Interpret +1, Psionic Device +1

FACILITATION PACKAGE 4

The Traveller continues to develop their abilities to work wonders, now at a distance. Telesperimentation can be used to Form materials viewed remotely by psionic means.

INT +1, PSI +1

Skills: Jack-of-all-Trades +1, Telekinesis +1
Special Ability: Telesperimentation +2

FACILITATION PACKAGE 5

The Traveller's understanding of the cosmos expands, enabling more difficult tasks to be undertaken.

EDU +2, PSI +1

Skills: Awareness +1, Telekinesis +1
Special Ability: Omni-science +2, Psionic Device +1

FACILITATION PACKAGE 6

The Traveller's development concludes with knowledge of how to control energy flow without any physical medium.

INT+1, PSI +2

Skills: Ancients Tech +1, Awareness +1, Telekinesis +1
Special Abilities: Energy Mastery +2, Interpret +1

THE PATH OF ALL

The Path of All creates a generalist who can tackle most situations but will not excel in the manner of the specialists.

ALL PACKAGE 1

The Traveller may pick any three General Enhancements and gains Interpret +1 and Psionic Device +1.

ALL PACKAGE 2

The Traveller may choose any level 1 package from one of the other paths. They may repeat one they have already taken.

ALL PACKAGE 3

The Traveller may choose any level 1 or 2 package from one of the other paths. They may repeat one they have already taken.

ALL PACKAGE 4

The Traveller may choose one level 1 or 2 package plus one level 3 package from any of the other paths. They may repeat one they have already taken.

ALL PACKAGE 5

The Traveller may choose one level 1 or 2 package plus one level 4 package from any of the other paths. They may repeat one they have already taken.

ALL PACKAGE 6

The Traveller may choose one level 1 or 2 package plus one level 5 package from any of the other paths. They may repeat one they have already taken.

GENERAL ENHANCEMENTS

Each time a Traveller receives an uplift package they may also take a General Enhancement. The same one may be chosen multiple times:

- Increase any characteristic by +2
- Take 4 skill levels in any non-psionic skill or divide them between any non-psionic skills
- Increase any a psionic skill already possessed by +2 or gain level 1 in any new psionic skill
- Increase any special ability the Traveller possesses by +2
- Change paths

A Traveller who changes path may choose whether to gain their current package for this uplift incident and gain the 1st package in the new field next time, or to switch immediately and gain the 1st package now.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Many uplift packages include special abilities, which are detailed here.

AUGMENTED PSI SHIELD

A being with an augmented psionic shield has greater defence against psionic attacks. Their Augmented Psi Shield level is added to their PSI value when conducting psionic defence. It does not apply to psionic nightmares once the effect has been implemented but does help the Traveller resist the initial attack.

CAUSE DEATH

The Cause Death ability does exactly that and nothing else. The user can cause the life processes of any being they can see by physical or psionic means to stop. This could be done by clairvoyance or through a linked servitor but not to someone seen on a security monitor. The user can cause one being or animal of any size to die, or kill any or all plants, fungi and even bacteria within one kilometre per level. This may be selective or a general massacre. Psionically shielded individuals are protected. One death can be caused every combat round.

COMMAND

The Command ability can only be used by someone who has at least Telepathy 1. It is similar to Suggestion but much more powerful. The target can be directly controlled, essentially allowing the user to take over their body. This begins the instant control is exerted and lasts until the user releases the victim or relinquishes control due to being distracted. During this time the user can still act using their own body but suffers DM-2 to all checks due to the difficulties of being in two places at once. Alternatively, the user can implant an instruction in one person per level, which must be encapsulated in six words or less. The instruction can be general, such as 'protect me from all threats' or specific such as 'bring me the McGuffin'. The target will then do their best to carry out the command using their discretion and intelligence. Establishing command over someone requires a Difficult (10+) Command check after overcoming their mental shield if they have one. Control can be broken by the target if they succeed in a Very Difficult (12+) INT check. Checks can be made whenever the target is about to do something they do not wish to but only once for every intended action.

DESTRUCTION

The Destruction ability is akin to being armed with a disintegrator at all times. One kilogram of matter can be disintegrated per round. This is automatic unless a psionic or artificial shield is protecting the object. If so, the attacker must defeat the shield for the disintegration attack to succeed.

ENERGY MASTERY

An individual with Energy Mastery can draw power from the fabric of the universe itself. This does not violate the laws of physics; the energy is taken from one place to another and can be changed in form. For example, a Traveller might decide to provide power to a crippled starship by drawing energy from cosmic background radiation, or could take energy away from an area of ground – thereby cooling it – and getting rid of the energy by emitting sparks from their fingers. This ability can be used as a weapon in various ways; an electric discharge or similar delivers up to 1D damage per level of Energy Mastery, as the user wishes. Machines and vehicles can be disabled by drawing their power away. The user must concentrate throughout, acting only as a power supply.

FIGHTER

The Fighter ability grants its level in any weapons requiring contact with the enemy, from claws to pikes. The level is applied as an additional DM on top of any skill the Traveller has with a specific weapon and is assumed to act as skill level 0 in all other weapons. In addition, each level of Fighter skill grants the AP +2 trait for any weapon and adds +2 damage per dice. For example, someone with Melee (blade) 2 and Fighter 2 using a sword that would normally do 2D damage gains DM+4 to attack rolls, reduces enemy Protection by -2, and increases damage to 2D+4.

FORM

A Traveller with the Form ability can alter solid non-living matter in large and small scale ways. The material's nature cannot be changed, nor can mass be added other than by bringing more of it. A pile of scrap steel could be formed into a useful scaffold or the frame of a building, for example. Gross alterations like this require only a Routine (6+) check and are unlikely to fail. Fine alterations, such as embedding wiring and water pipes in the structure using additional materials, require a Difficult (10+) check. Microscopic alterations require a Formidable (14+) check. If the Traveller is working with advanced materials such as Malleable they can embed life support circuitry, disintegrator shields, or anything else they want when they Form the material. It is possible to construct a starship, drives and all, in this manner but this takes a long time. Typically, changes require one minute per kilogram of matter for simple alterations, 10 minutes per kilogram for complex alterations and one hour per kilogram for microscopic alterations.

IMPOSE

The Impose ability permits a Traveller to implement a psionic information transfer in the form of a psi-dream, or to attack someone with a psionic nightmare, as described on page 33. It is used to begin a nightmare, after Interpret is used to determine the narrative.

INTERPRET

The Interpret ability permits a Traveller to make better sense of psionic dreams and nightmares. Interpret is considered a psionic skill if a Traveller wants to gain or increase it using General Enhancement. Its level is applied as a DM on PSI checks used for interpretation attempts and when trying to alter the narrative of a psionic nightmare. It does not grant the ability to implement a psionic information transfer or impose a nightmare.

LIFE SAVANT

A Life Savant understands and can analyse life processes on an instinctive level. Their skill acts as an additional DM when carrying out tasks related to medicine, biology, biochemistry or any other field connected with living things. The user can be considered to have level 0 in any relevant Science skills but not those connected with non-life processes.

LOYALTY

The Loyalty ability can be used to condition someone to be completely and unbreakably loyal to the user. This process takes a variable amount of time depending on the INT of the subject. The user must interact with – or show off to – the subject whilst using the ability, which might mean strutting about regaling the subject with tales of how great they are or having a choir of servitors sing their praises all day. Graphic demonstrations of power are also useful. Each day of this the Loyalty user generates 1D 'conditioning points' which can be applied to one recipient or divided among a group. Once an amount of conditioning points equal to the subject's INT have been applied, they are now completely loyal. They cannot act against the user nor allow anyone else to, although how far they will go depends on their personality and degree of brainwashing. Animals can be conditioned in this manner as well as sentient beings. Some Loyalty users cycle their followers through a conditioning programme in batches, essentially making them act as an audience for their master's greatness until they are thoroughly indoctrinated. Breaking this obedience-conditioning is theoretically possible but would require long periods of therapy or a carefully conducted psionic intervention.

MAGNETIC PERSONALITY

A being with a Magnetic Personality can use its level as an additional DM when attempting to impress or command someone. In addition, they have an indefinable regal quality to their speech and bearing, and will naturally stand out in any group.

MASS RITUAL

The Mass Ritual ability permits an individual to lead rituals in the manner of the Ritual ability but these can include and assist much greater numbers of people. This ability is necessary for psionic crafting by groups. The Mass Ritual can include or affect six people per level, in addition to the user. A Mass Ritual can also be used to augment the psi shields or skills of everyone involved by a DM equal to the user's Ritual level.

MENTAL CITADEL

A being with the Mental Citadel ability is totally immune to adverse telepathic effects. They cannot be Punished, Commanded or Assaulted. In addition, even if their shield is penetrated their thoughts cannot be read unless they want them to be.

MORPH

An individual with the Morph ability can change the form of themselves or another person, a slow and rather painful process. Mass cannot be altered but tissue can be reshaped. The user might decide to grow wings or claws, or to subject someone to a horrific fate as they slowly turn into a giant fibrous mass whilst retaining consciousness. Small changes such as claws take 2D hours to appear, whilst major changes like growing wings will take as many days. Complete morphing of a being typically takes place over 2D weeks. A successful morphing attempt requires a check: Average (8+) for small changes, Difficult (10+) for major changes and Very Difficult (12+) for complete alteration of form. Failure results in a great deal of pain but no changes unless Effect -6 or worse is achieved. This will result in the subject changing into some kind of monster or their tissues just falling apart.

OMNI-SCIENCE

Omni-science is not the same as omniscience. The Traveller is not all-seeing but they do have knowledge of all areas of science as defined by the Science skill. The Omni-science level can be applied to endeavours in any field of knowledge. This ability comes accompanied by a voracious appetite for data and information which can only be quieted by reading, learning, experimenting and generally fiddling about with everything from nearby rocks to the entire cosmos.

PONDER

The Ponder ability sets the individual's subconscious working at a task. This is usually long-term, directed at solving some major problem. The individual must spend time each day researching or conducting experimentation but this may be only an hour or two each day and may be nothing more than sitting in silence thinking deep thoughts. This ability is incredibly powerful, as it can allow deep secrets of the cosmos to be revealed, so its use is at the Referee's discretion. Every 2D days of Pondering, the user may make a Formidable (14+) INT check with their Ponder ability as a DM. Exactly how much

Effect is required to solve a problem is up to the Referee. Something relatively minor like a complex equation might require just one point, with tasks like 'how do I create a stable rosette of five planets?' requiring perhaps 10,000. Someone with INT 25 and Ponder +4 would be looking at DM+10 on this check, thus averaging Effect +3 every seven days. Planning the movement of planets to create a rosette would thus require a few years to come up with a plan. Implementing might take longer, however.

PROWESS

Someone with the Prowess ability is physically adept even if they do not have specific skills. It acts as an additional DM when undertaking any purely physical activity. It may also be applied in situations where the user's obvious physical capabilities may influence others, such as an attempt to intimidate someone.

PSIONIC DEVICES

Some weapons and devices have a psionic trigger instead of a physical one and cannot be used by non-psions. The Traveller can attune themselves to a device and use it, even if they have no psionic talents; access is possible to all Ancients devices but the Traveller will need to figure them out and remove any security features blocking them. Psionic Device provides a DM to do this.

PSIONICOLOGY

The study of psionics is a speciality area for scientists but the understanding achieved is an academic and distant one. A psionicologist has a far more instinctive insight into the field. The best analogy is the difference between possessing a working knowledge of anatomy and being able to move your own limbs. Psionicology can be used as a DM when trying to perform a complex task or figure out an application for a psionic talent. It is also used when attempting to spot subtle and non-obvious uses of psionic talents and devices.

PUNISH

The Punish ability can only be used by someone who has at least Telepathy 1. It permits the user to cause intense physical and/or psychological distress to anyone whose shield can be penetrated. This is similar to a telepathic assault, except that no actual damage is caused. Anyone trying to act whilst being telepathically punished must make an Average (8+) END check each round or be unable to do more than writhe and scream. This check is subject to a negative DM equal to the user's Punish level. One target can be affected per level.

RESILIENCE

The Resilience ability is mostly physical but does have a psionic component. Each level provides Protection +2 against all physical attacks and reduces harm from radiation by 20 rads. In addition, the Traveller will regenerate one point to each of STR, DEX and END per combat round, per level.

RITUAL

The Ritual ability permits an individual to interpret, perform and invent rituals which assist in the performance of psionic tasks. This increases the time required to carry out the task. The Ritual can be performed on behalf of one other person, or the user can gain the benefit for their own tasks. Ritual grants a DM up to its level to be applied, taking 1D minutes per DM+1.

SHOOTER

The Shooter ability grants its skill level in any and all ranged weapons. Skill level is applied as an additional DM on any Gun Combat or Heavy Weapons checks and attack rolls, and is assumed to grant level 0 in Gun Combat and Heavy Weapons if they are not already possessed. In addition, each level of Shooter grants AP +2 for any weapon used.

TEAM EFFORT

A group of up to six individuals, all of whom have at least one level in Team Effort, can work together extremely efficiently. They may use all their collective levels of Team Effort as a roving DM to be applied at any point in the task. To make this work the leader of the group – or whoever they serve – must declare a project and define its parameters. This could be anything from tidying up the docking bay to building a planetbuster weapon. Each point of Team Effort can only be used once in a given project. If only one person has Team Effort, they can use their DM to assist anyone else who is working on the same project.

TELESPERIMENTATION

Telesperimentation is a specialist combination of telekinesis and clairvoyance. It permits the user to perform dangerous experiments from a safe distance – such as aboard a starship orbiting a different planet. Fine control is possible but the user cannot move objects heavier than 10 kilograms. They can, of course, set up the experiment and manipulate the controls telekinetically, or order servitors to do it. Telesperimentation is more about observing effects than causing them and allows the experimenter to witness emissions and events beyond normal range; it is possible to watch electrons react and see the gamma radiation emitted using this power.

TIRELESS

Someone with the Tireless ability can work at a project without becoming fatigued or bored. For every level of Tireless, the Traveller can work around the clock for 1D days. This effectively triples the amount of work they can do or the time they can spend waiting to act at a moment's notice. If the Traveller is doing something that requires concentration, they will not waver. This allows the use of the Traveller's Tireless level as a DM on any appropriate task. For example, if a Traveller is standing with a weapon pointed at the door, waiting for someone to open it, they can stay there, unmoving, for 1D days per level of Tireless and can use their level as a DM to determine initiative and whether that critical first plasma bolt hits home.

WONDROUS LEADERSHIP

Someone with the Wondrous Leadership ability is just plain amazing. Everything they do is super-impressive and even just standing around makes them look magnificently awesome. People stop and stare when they enter a room and are saddened when they leave. Weak minds might actually become addicted to the presence of their Wondrous Leader without any need for conditioning. The merest hint of notice or approval from such an august presence inspires joy and gratitude. Essentially, Wondrous Leadership makes everything the user does seem epic. It grants DM+2 on all checks to lead, inspire, rally, persuade or otherwise get people to do what the user wants. Followers who have lost their leader might rally to a Wondrous Leader whether they want to or not and might follow them right across Charted Space in the hope of being noticed. Those seeking a cause might make the Wondrous Leader their reason to live.

USING SPECIAL ABILITIES

These uplift incidents might seem like they create grossly overpowered Travellers. Absolutely! They do indeed create Travellers who are far above their species norms but that is the point. Some of these abilities are straightforward, others more complex, and all can be used in a variety of creative ways. The campaign at this point is cinematic and the Travellers' actions will not be in any way routine. Thus it is acceptable for the Travellers to find inventive ways to use their abilities. The Referee can veto any truly outrageous suggestions but the Travellers are on their way to gaining the power of the Ancients. Let them enjoy abusing that power!

Note that some abilities have few direct uses. At this stage the Travellers should be above wanting another DM+1 to attack rolls with their gauss pistol; they would better be thinking in terms of reshaping the cosmos. Some abilities are largely cinematic in effect and should have results that make the Travellers feel like gods. The adulation shown to someone with Wondrous Leadership does not have to translate into a DM to be useful. The Traveller might use it to manipulate the politics of a planet by creating a cult of devoted followers and leaving them instructions to push for a given policy, to topple the government, or whatever. Indeed, this might happen whether the Traveller intended it or not. How might they react upon finding that a leader has arisen claiming to speak for them and started a civil war? In short, these abilities are as much about experiencing what it is to be an Ancient as modifiers on skill checks.

The Referee should not detail everything the Travellers can and cannot do with their new powers. Instead, the Travellers should be encouraged to experiment and push the limits of their abilities. If they can find creative ways to use them, so much the better! The Travellers will discover that overcoming mundane opposition is boring now. Wiping out an armoured brigade might be fun the first couple of times but eventually that will diminish too. What is left for someone who can pull energy out of the ground and fling it at their enemies, or cause everything within a kilometre to simply die? That is a question for the Travellers to answer.

COLD MOON

Before beginning play, the Referee should ensure the Travellers are ready. The second uplift incident has happened and the Referee should make sure the Travellers have some understanding of their new powers. They will have to experiment and push the boundaries of what they can do – which are very broad. In the time since the end of *Secrets of the Ancients*, the Travellers will have learned the basics of what they can now do and should comprehend that they are on an uplift path determined by their choice in the dream.

The Referee also needs to establish what equipment the Travellers have and what they would take into a situation where they boarded a ship like the one in the dream. This is what they will have with them when play begins. The Travellers can have some leeway about this – if they can make a valid case for a piece of kit the Referee should assume they brought it. This applies to personal items rather than huge or heavy objects, or those with very specific uses which the Travellers would not logically think they needed.

The Travellers have a ship. This may be Dart, from *Secrets of the Ancients*, or some other vessel. If their own survived the end of *Secrets of the Ancients*, then this is the vessel they will be using. If not, they can be assigned a suitable craft. It might have come from Seven or Yaskoydray, or the Travellers may have found themselves another. The Referee need not be too generous with this vessel; the Travellers are about to get a better one.

The campaign opens with the Travellers in the middle of something... but they are not sure what. Their memories have been temporarily disrupted in the middle of a crisis, which may be somewhat inconvenient. By the time they have resolved the immediate problem they will remember how they got into this situation. That might vary a little depending on the Travellers' actions in the previous campaigns. If so, the Referee will need to alter the backstory to suit.

The default option is that the Travellers headed back towards Imperial space after the battle between Yaskoydray and Seven. Along the way, they experienced a very strange dream-like episode in which they witnessed a mighty ship dying. It was crewed by Droyne, who appeared to be servants of an Ancient. The ship was large, cruiser-sized perhaps, and equipped with a mix of Droyne and Ancients technology. It took the form of a flattened sphere, more or less, or a very thick disc with protrusions here and there. It shimmered, silvery-grey, and it was quite beautiful.

The ship was approaching a gas giant moon, searching for something perhaps. It flew serenely above the methane clouds, scanning the surface with its instruments. Without warning, jagged holes appeared in its upper surface. It tilted crazily and veered away from the planet, spinning and tipping as if trying to throw off something grappling its upper surface. Apparently it succeeded, although the Travellers could not see any assailant. Frightful weapons lashed out and something died. The Travellers had a vague impression of fleshy structures… a biological warship? Severed tentacles, tens of metres long, tumbled into the moon's atmosphere.

The Travellers' point of view moved inside the ship, to a control room where a powerful Droyne leader ordered his Warriors to protect the ship. They tried. The first to reach the hull breaches were overwhelmed by boarders, creatures like the G482 the Travellers have previously encountered. These were not invisible, or else the Droyne Warriors were immune to their special talent but they were ferocious and savage. Plasma guns and disintegrators cut down many but they overran the first line of defenders and intercepted the next groups to arrive.

The G482 creatures the Travellers have previously encountered were mindless slaughter machines but these acted as if they had a purpose or were commanded. They mobbed the Warriors and any other Droyne they encountered, and drove towards the command chamber. The ship's Leader rallied a new wave of Warriors and positioned them well but the attack was a ruse. Even as the horde of invaders was thrown back by a fusillade of plasma, a group reached its true goal. They broke into chambers that commanded the ship's systems and killed the Technicians there. They tore out control systems, sending the ship spiralling down into the atmosphere. Then they… stopped.

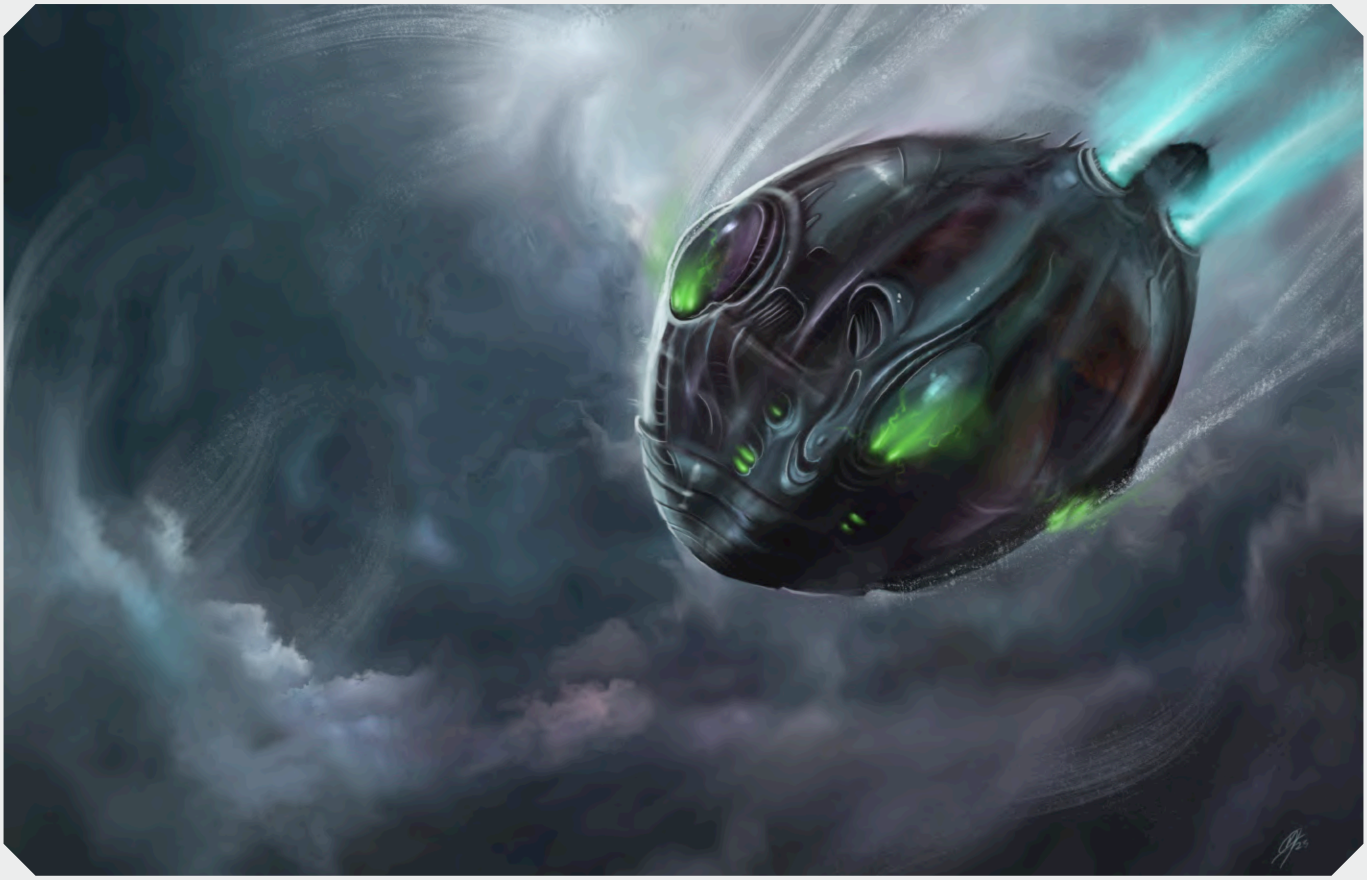
The surviving Warriors quickly eliminated the intruders they found. Their ship was doomed, however. Barely under control, it plunged into the methane clouds, leaving a twisting trail of gas and debris behind it. The Leader gave orders and his crew obeyed. They fought gravity and almost won but in the end were betrayed by the torn surfaces of their ship. Gas dragged at the ship, spinning it and confounding the efforts of its crew. Finally, it plunged into a frozen sea of methane, tearing the front and underside of the vessel away and sank into liquid melted by the crash. It settled, tilted at a shallow angle, and around it the ice froze once again.

The Travellers knew where the ship had died, although none could say how. They voyaged to the cold moon, landing atop the wreck, and found a way in. The wreck still had a little power; the ship's systems struggled to support life where none existed. Everywhere there was evidence of a titanic battle but not all casualties were caused by the invaders. The crash killed others, as did the slow seepage of freezing methane through damaged bulkheads. Those repaired themselves as best they could but too late. The Travellers found the wreck apparently lifeless and made their way to the command chamber.

The chamber was similar to the one in their dream, although different in some details. The Travellers were able to access the command podium and retrieve a data storage gem. It held vital knowledge, they knew, if they could only decode its contents. As they worked, they marvelled at the incredible beauty of the control chamber. Its walls were adorned with swirling patterns that somehow told a story, conjuring images in the Travellers' minds. They saw an Ancient, perhaps Seven, sending out the crew to do his bidding. The crew were to find an installation hidden on some cold moon. The story of the ship's last moments was embedded in the wall patterns by its chief Drone just before she died. It ends with the crash and a sense of desperate longing. The mission was in vain and the sense of loss and disappointment that washed over the Travellers was enough to disorient them and scramble their memories.

The Travellers are bereft of their memories other than a scattering of blurry thoughts and a knowledge of one another's identities. They stand in the wreckage of the control chamber, looking around in confused surprise, and as one they voice a single word.

'Andor.'



ON A COLD MOON FAR AWAY

The Travellers are struck with a dreadful certainty that something is happening at the Droyne world of Andor. One of them holds the vessel's data storage gem. All are confused and disorientated. Their attempts to unscramble their memories initially fail but they are able to take stock of the situation. They stand in an ornate command chamber, with the bodies of the crew scattered around. There are more of them than in the dream but the scene is otherwise familiar: a Leader crumpled at the foot of the command podium, lying entangled with the corpses of two Warriors who tried to protect him with their bodies. The ship's chief Drone is nearby, with Technicians near the control areas.

The Travellers may wish to loot the bodies, if such things are not yet beneath them, or investigate further. It seems that parts of the ship were protected from the initial crash by emergency stasis fields and some personnel made it through the initial impact thanks to their kinetic shields but these failed under the strain as the ship slid into the ice. The command crew are all Droyne and have died of either internal injuries resulting from the crash or obvious physical trauma from being flung against solid surfaces.

The regalia of the Leader and Drone are particularly gorgeous and even the lesser castes are equipped with fine clothing and excellent tools. The warriors have plasma rifles and the Leader has a rod of office. All personnel have clothing/armour suitable for their caste. However, all personal shields have disintegrated after absorbing as much energy as they could take. Looting the bodies will be a messy business as they are partially pulped and have begun to be absorbed into the ship's decks. This is part of its self-cleaning and maintenance system, which will eradicate the casualties within a day or two.

The Travellers may be thoroughly baffled by all of this but their memories gradually untangle themselves. They are here seeking answers about the dream-like experience they all shared and whilst they are not really any the wiser at this point they do know that something is happening at Andor. They will also recall the details of their encounter with Yaskoydray and Seven. If the Travellers agreed to work for Seven, he has gone out of contact. They may not be aware of this just yet, since the usual practice is to give minions orders then get on with something important until they report back. However, at some point the Travellers will realise that Seven is out of the picture. In the meantime, they can explore the wrecked Droyne ship.

GENERAL CONDITION

The ship is completely wrecked, beyond the capabilities of even the Ancients to repair. Its materials could be harvested for reuse and perhaps reformed in situ into a smaller vessel by someone with the Form ability. All the Travellers can do is explore and see what they can learn. Life support still works in areas that have not been breached; either a segment of the ship is well-lit and comfortable or is exposed to half-melted methane slush.

The basic layout of the vessel is a wide disc, thicker near the outer edges and thinner towards the middle, except where bulges contain important systems such as the main disintegrator weapons or field generators. About half of the ship is simply gone, scattered in small fragments under the ice. The side of the disc that impacted first was broken off and destroyed, and the underside of the ship was torn away as it slid. Other areas were breached by enemy attack or the crash and are now full of ice. The Travellers could of course find a way to get rid of this but there is little to find in the trashed compartments. Blasting the ice with plasma guns will vaporise large chunks, which might endanger anyone nearby but will not harm the ship's bulkheads. Disintegrating the ice might be an elegant solution but the ship's internal defences include disintegrator shields which would have to be turned off first.

COMMAND CHAMBERS

The command chambers lie at the heart of the ship. They are typical of the type; circular with a central command podium and positions for the Technicians who guided the ship. The Travellers are by now able to command telepathically controlled devices so can connect themselves to the control points if they want, requiring an Average (8+) INT check. Familiarity with this process will allow the Travellers to automatically perform the task in the future.

What the Travellers will find is that each control station has a highly compartmentalised function. Drives are controlled at one, whilst navigation calculations are handled at another. Life support, weapons, defences and crew guidance are all controlled from different stations. A Traveller connecting to one will gain a very narrow set of information but a great deal of it. Most is incomprehensible at this point; a stream of information about the exact power levels, temperature, condition of systems and all manner of other data which can be overwhelming. Essentially they are experiencing what the automatic control systems of a human ship deal with on a second-by-second basis.

It is possible to rewind the data stream, so to speak, and learn a little more about the fate of the ship. The weapons station tells its operator about the exact parameters of every discharge, whilst the driver station does the same for every iota of thrust and power. There is no 'big picture' however; the servitors who operated the ship did not merit one. Instead they handled their own tasks under the direction of their Leader.

The central command podium should have the 'big picture' the Travellers want but it is inert. At the death of the ship's Leader it shut down to await reactivation by a replacement. All that is left are automated systems intended to maintain and self-repair the vessel. They have no chance of success but will try anyway. The ship's records were downloaded to a data storage gem, which the Travellers have already retrieved, but this cannot be accessed at the present time.

POWER GENERATION CHAMBERS

The ship's power generation chambers were located in a ring around the command spaces. The lower chambers are gone or filled with ice. Their fail-safe systems have worked, bleeding off the power stored in their antimatter plants in a safe manner. If they had not, there would be little left of the ship by now. The upper ring survived the crash but had already been penetrated by the boarders.

The area is a disaster zone, with bodies of Warriors and Technicians interspersed with the boarders. These are creatures similar to the G482 the Travellers previously encountered. However, these are different. They have been modified to have extremely thick skin and membranes covering their eyes. These creatures can survive hard vacuum for a short time; long enough to board a starship and start attacking the crew. The Travellers can find out more about the creatures by examining the dead ones. They seem to have been created by the same process as G482. If the Travellers think to take tissue samples they can confirm that this is the case.

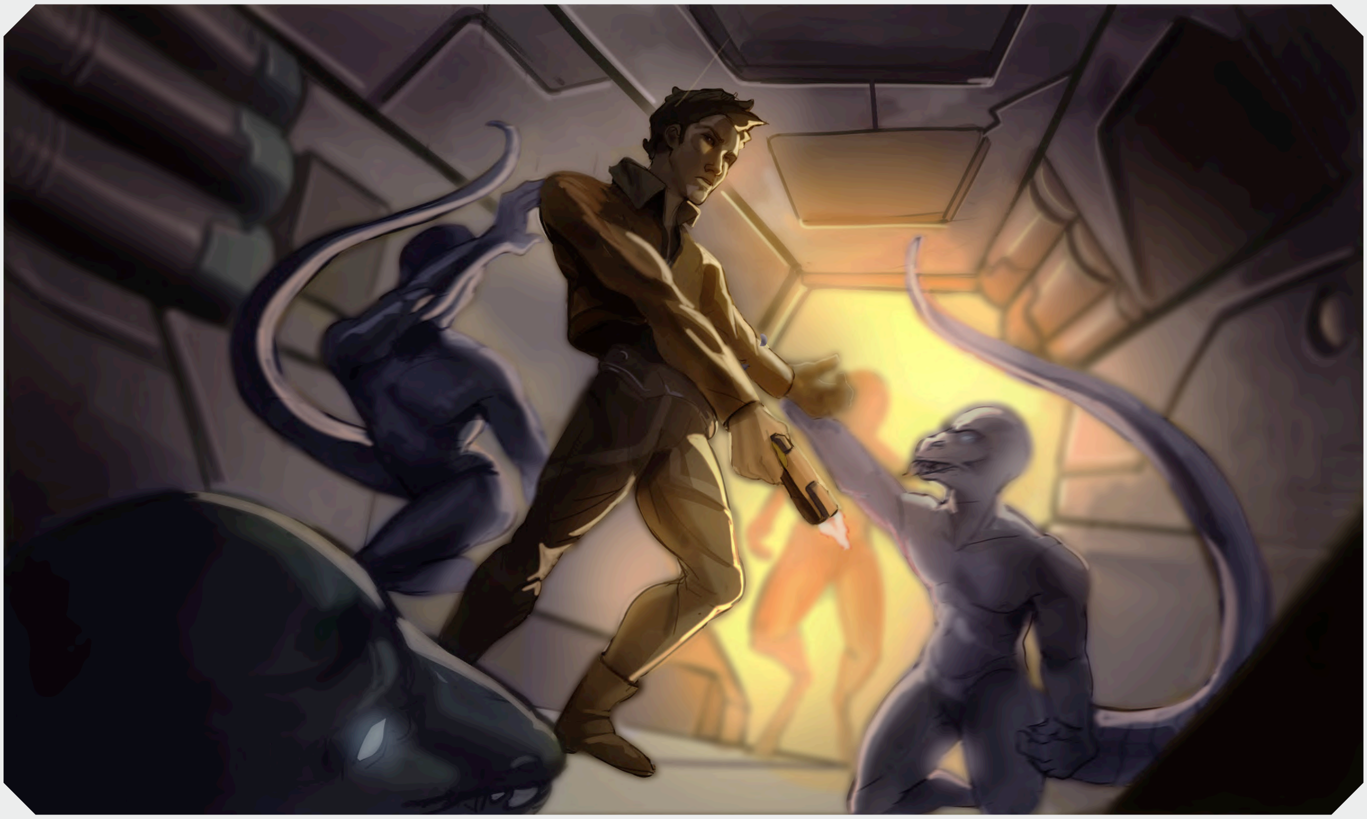
The creatures were immature Droyne who have been subjected to an altered casteing process which caused them to develop into monsters. However, these are not the mindless killers the Travellers previously encountered. They are more cunning, capable of using elementary combat tactics and recognising assigned targets. Some tore up the governing system for the power plant whilst others fought the guards, ultimately dooming the ship.

Whilst examining the creatures, the Travellers may discover that some have gem-like objects implanted in the flesh of their throat. Determining the function of these gems is not hard for the Travellers. An ordinary person would more than likely never be able to figure out what they are for but the Travellers have gained the ability to interrogate a device and determine its function or even attune it to their control. These devices are simple telepathic relays which allow a coordinating intellect to see through the creature's eyes and give it instructions in the form of impulses. Although rather basic this control method allows a group to be controlled by what amounts to implanting telepathic suggestions in rapid sequence. This explains the coordination shown by the creatures.

The telepathic link is still active. Travellers attempting to interact with it will feel the presence of a large and powerful but rather low-intellect mind. It is confused and hurt but will attempt to lash out at the Travellers. Even if they do not investigate the creatures this response may be triggered, which has two effects. One is to initiate telepathic combat with the mind. In addition, a handful of creatures which survived the crash in a stasis field intended to protect the crew are now activated and will hunt the Travellers.

The creatures know where the Travellers are and have no purpose other than to destroy them. They use a simple but robust method, charging into the power chambers and attempting to rip the Travellers apart with claws and teeth. How many there are depends on the capabilities of the Travellers. This could be a turkey shoot if the Travellers have plasma rifles, except for one factor: the creatures cooperate more like elements of a single opponent than a group. This is exactly what is going on – they are being controlled and used to their best effect.

The Travellers should be able to blast the first couple that enter the chamber easily enough. These creatures do not have the invisibility power of G482 and the Travellers are likely immune to that anyway. Tactics change after the first attack, becoming cleverer but in a pack-of-predators way rather than in the manner of a human tactician. One creature will run at the Travellers, presenting a clear and imminent threat to draw their fire and as it is being immolated another will leap over it to attack the shooter. This is more of a problem than the Travellers might have been expecting but they should be able to handle the situation. However, there is another complication.



The mind the Travellers sensed begins to attack them. This is not simple psionic assault but more a matter of being drawn into its dying nightmares. Everyone who has made contact with the telepathic relay gems – and anyone else the Referee thinks should come under attack – feels a powerful wave of pain and disorientation. From this moment on they are in a psionic nightmare and subject to the effects noted on page 34. If they are to escape from the mental assault they may have to ignore the physical one or be protected by others.

Each of the Travellers is drawn into a nightmare according to their nature. The theme is the same each time; they are falling or trapped aboard the sinking Droyne vessel and will be lost if they cannot escape. The default scenario presented here can be altered or completely replaced if that is desirable. For example, a pilot might dream of being trapped in the gravity well of a black hole with a malfunctioning drive whilst a scientist might be locked in a lab with an experiment going lethally awry. Creative Referees can torment the Travellers with vastly different scenarios, giving each a nightmare all of their own. Even if the Travellers all share the same scenario, each is alone in their own version of it.

This psionic nightmare is different to some of those that happen later in the campaign, in that it is more or less accidental. It still has the potential to be lethal but there is no malicious intent, so the Travellers' checks are unopposed on this occasion. This is also an opportunity for the Referee to familiarise the Travellers with the mechanics of negotiating such a situation.

The default scenario takes place aboard the vessel the Travellers currently occupy. They are aware that this is a telepathic dream but if they die here they are truly dead. The ship is tilting, sliding into the ice as it melts due to escaping reactor plasma or malfunctioning weapons. To fully succeed, a Traveller must succeed in solving three problems.

Survive: The lights are dimming and the ship is tilting ever more. The sound of melted methane ice rushing through the ship can be heard. Contact could be fatal. The Traveller must solve this problem in some way, adjudicated by a PSI check with the Traveller's Interpret ability as a DM if they have it. The check is Difficult (10+) and must be accompanied by a suitable in-dream action. One Traveller might imagine they ran to a high place; another might make a dive for the door controls. Succeeding in the check imposes a favourable result on the situation in the dream.

Failure results in being tumbled through the ship in a slush of methane. The Traveller's physical body might display symptoms of extreme cold despite the situation being entirely imaginary. The Effect of this check is retained as a running total.

Learn: Perhaps after being washed up by the methane flood, the Traveller must find some piece of vital information. This might be simulated by interrogating the ship's data system, or more disturbingly by trying to get a lost contact – perhaps Sorrel or Vlen, from previous campaigns in the trilogy – to divulge some vital fact as they are dying. Again, a Difficult (10+) check is needed to impose a favourable outcome on the situation. Essentially, a positive Effect allows the Traveller to narrate what happens whilst a negative one requires the Referee to present a less pleasant outcome. The Effect of this check is added to the running total for the nightmare.

Escape: The Traveller must escape from the sinking vessel. This can be by any means they can conceive. One Traveller might imagine they run to a teleporter; another might have a choir of angels rescue them. This is a dreamworld where anything can happen. The Traveller must make a Difficult (10+) check to carry out the imagined action. Physically normal actions are no easier than outrageously weird ones, a fact the Travellers might not immediately pick up on.

This is a very strange situation; one in which the Travellers have been drawn into the dying mind of the creature controlling the boarders. It is psionically quite powerful but not adept, and not consciously trying to defeat the Travellers' minds. This is a chance for them to learn about this kind of combat before they encounter a powerful and hostile intellect. The Travellers are also facing a physical threat, which might complicate matters.

This rather weird situation is not about making a specific check to achieve a particular result. It is more a matter of the Travellers imposing their will on the situation. It should be played out in a narrative form, with the Travellers reacting to the imagined situation as they think best. If a Traveller wants to change the narrative they can do so if they pass the check. For example, they could simply announce that there is no melted ice in the ship, or that they are not in the ship at all. A Traveller who takes control of the situation in this manner may be learning a lesson that will be useful later. They could simply decide that they walked out of the ship into a nice coffee shop on Rhylanor if that pleases them and if they make the check it happens.

In this case, the creature is not smart enough to oppose the Travellers' attempts to take control of the narrative. A superior intellect could fight them, inventing pitfalls and disasters to prevent their escape. Travellers who want to help one another can only do so if they have a telepathic link. Otherwise they are linked to the dying creature individually and not to each other. Even if the Travellers fail all three checks the outcome should not be too serious, although they should gain the impression that things could have been very bad if they were up against a determined and malicious opponent.

G482 DERIVATIVE BOARDERS

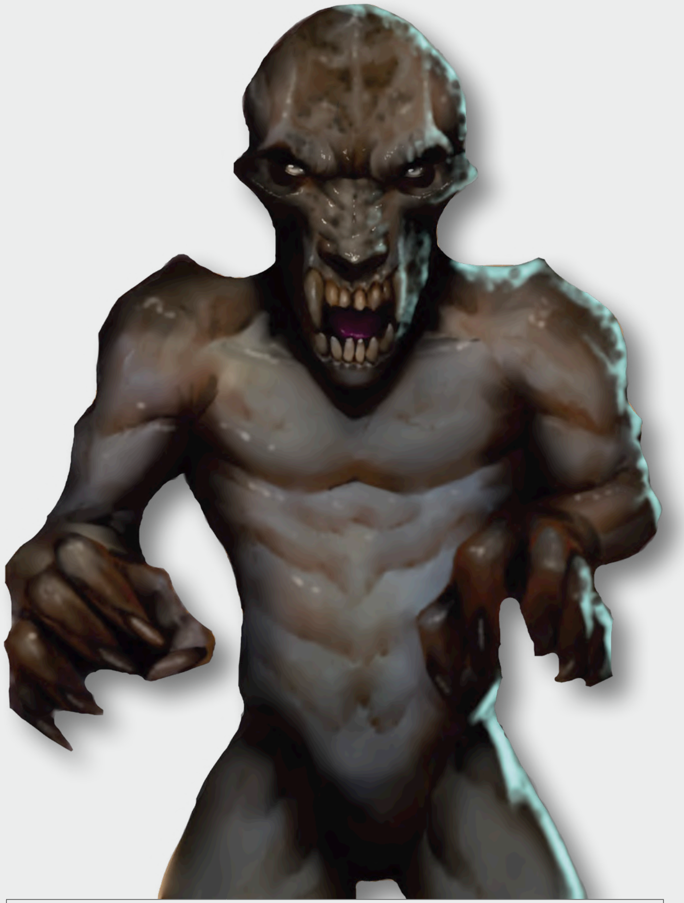
The creatures used for boarding are a modified version of the lifeform designated G482 by Imperial researchers. The Travellers will be familiar with these creatures from their earlier adventures and will recognise these as similar. This variant does not have the invisibility/undetectability power of the standard G482 but has been optimised for operations in minimal atmosphere or hard vacuum. These conditions will kill the boarder eventually but its tissues carry a store of oxygen which allows full function for an hour or more and the creature can become dormant. This extends survival to days or even weeks.

These are highly unusual creatures whose metabolism is based on ambient energy rather than breaking down food, although it does need protein to grow new tissue. The composition of the creature is such that most weapons are relatively ineffective. Penetrating attacks such as bullets and harpoons are reduced to D3s – so a firearm normally doing 3D-3 does only 3D3-3 damage. Most other attacks – including crushing implements and direct energy such as lasers, fire or electricity, apply a modifier of -1 per dice. Thus a flame gun doing 5D damage does 5D-5. Cutting attacks do normal damage.

THE WRECK

GENERAL SPACES

Much of the ship is taken up with general spaces, most of which are roomy and well-lit. The majority are inaccessible, filled with ice or simply gone. Those that remain are taken up with sleeping pods, eating areas, ritual chambers and control areas for machinery, or the machinery itself. There are bodies in some of these spaces, partially absorbed into the floor as the ship cleans itself. The Travellers will find little of use in these areas, as devices have for the most part already been absorbed to assist the self-repair system. The locations and layout of these spaces probably has a logic but it can be hard to discern.



Animal	Hits	Speed
Boarder	44	8m
Skills	Melee (natural) 4, Recon 1	
Attacks	Claws and Teeth (2D+2)	
Traits	Armour +8, Heightened Senses	
Behaviour	Special	

STRANGE OPEN SPACE

Near to the command area is a strange open space containing a starship of around 400 tons. This seems odd as it is deep within the hull with no way to move in or out. Surely the chambers above or below do not move out of the way? The Travellers may wonder about this, Ancients being what they are, but a little investigation yields a different conclusion. This is a ship teleporter. In theory it can teleport a vessel to any other receiver/teleporter in the same network, but it is damaged. It can only use its 'lifeboat' function, teleporting the vessel into a high orbit over the moon. It will only do so if the vessel is active, which requires someone to be aboard it.

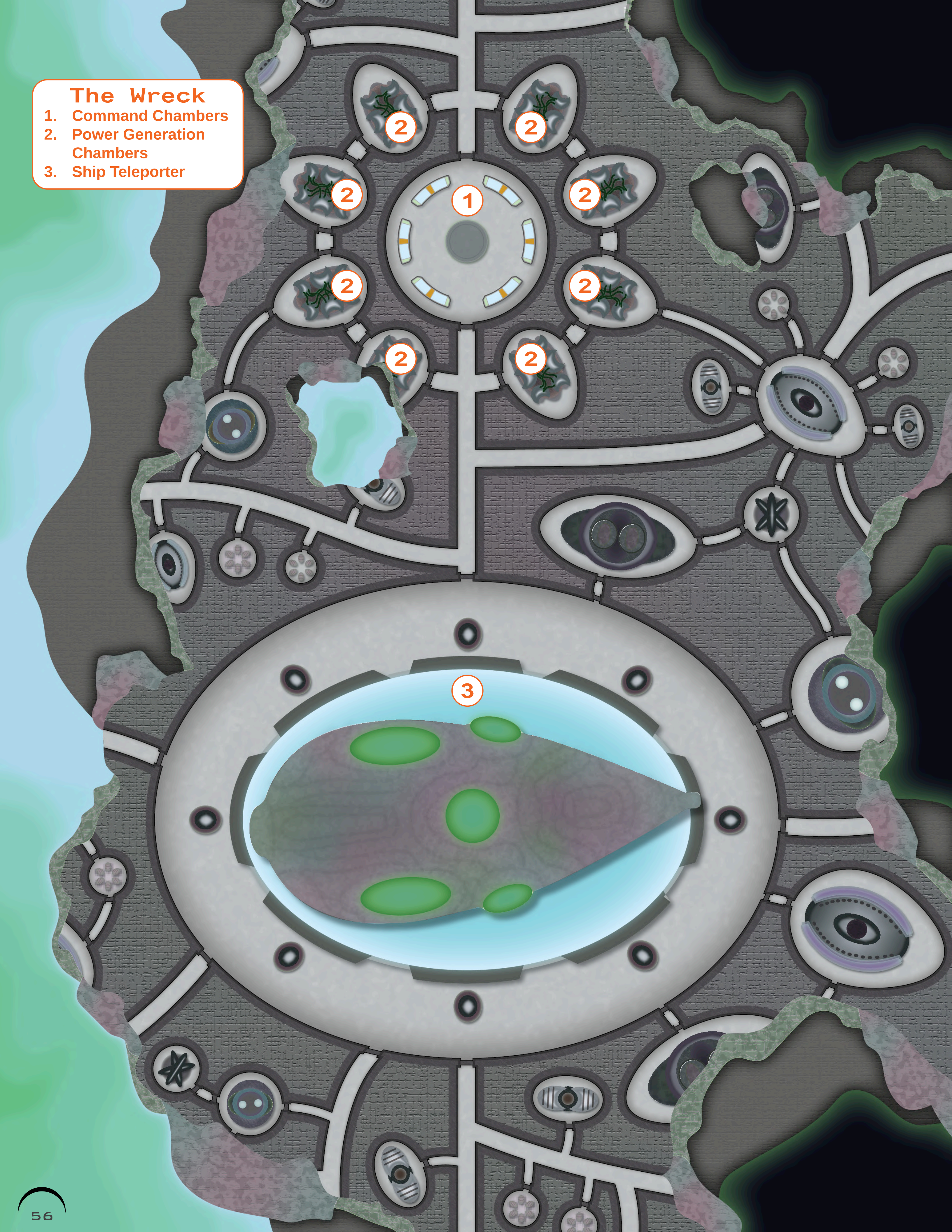
The ship currently on the pad is apparently undamaged and opens a concealed airlock upon telepathic command. The Travellers all know how to do this, as the ship is just another device. If they board the vessel they will realise it is a little different to Dart, perhaps because it was built by an Ancient with varying preferences. The vessel opens up to the Travellers as they move around it, permitting them to explore. Lights come on, life support starts up and the ship comes to life. Once the Travellers take command of the vessel, as described on page 60, they become aware that the teleporter is active. If they want, they can teleport their new ship into orbit.

AFTERWARD

The wreck will eventually sink into the methane sea. The Travellers will have plenty of time to get out, however. They could retrace their steps to their own ship, through part-breached compartments and up grav lifts that lurch and stop alarmingly. Alternatively, they could teleport the 400-ton ship into orbit. Descending back to the surface would permit them to retrieve their own vessel. It might be possible to pick up some samples of the creature that attacked the Droyne vessel. These will be segments of what appear to be tentacles, with thick skin capable of resisting vacuum and solar radiation. Analysis of these and some thought about what the Travellers witnessed during the psionic attack will provide some or all of the information below.

The attack was launched by and from a living biological vessel created by an Ancient who was not Yaskoydray or Seven. The name Tsyamoykyo, glowing with veneration, comes to mind when the Travellers think of who this might be. They see Tsyamoykyo through the eyes of those grateful to serve him; a radiant god in the shape of a Droyne. His every movement is glory; his speech a warm comforting glow. The merest touch of his mind is enough to make the very fibres of his servants sing… and so on. Tsyamoykyo's followers worship him, that much is clear.

The creature that attacked the ship was a creation of Tsyamoykyo. It was jump-capable and had a form of psionic invisibility similar to that possessed by Chirpers along with the ability to confound some standard detection instruments. Deep within its body it carried hordes of the creatures used for boarding. The ship-creature's tentacles ended in claws which were somehow psionically augmented, enabling it to tear through the hull of almost any vessel.



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The Wreck

1. Command Chambers
2. Power Generation Chambers
3. Ship Teleporter

THE NAMELESS SHIP

The Travellers will be able to take possession of the 400 ton subordinate vessel if they want. It is in perfect working condition despite the crash but has no personal equipment aboard. The ship will permit Travellers to wander around inside it and provide food, air and heating to suit their needs. It will not allow anyone to control its weapons or engines until they have taken control of the vessel in the command chamber.

The vessel is shaped like a teardrop, with bulges on the outer surface which correspond to weapons and major systems. The hull is formed from the same material as the wreck, with all necessary pipes and circuits embedded in the walls and bulkheads. Minor changes can be made by any authorised person, such as reconfiguring a sleeping area to contain a wardrobe and shelves for personal items. The original crew had no need for such things but Travellers may want to reshape the vessel to their liking. There is no provision for altering the shape of the outer hull, other than to allow the underside to conform to uneven terrain in the event it lands directly. More commonly the ship hovers on its gravitic lifters, just above the surface.

PERFORMANCE

The Nameless Ship is visually impressive, with a constantly changing pearlescent pattern moving over its teardrop-shaped hull. It rarely rests directly on a surface but will normally hover just above it and extend ramps down from its lower deck. The belly of the ship can flatten out at need to accommodate a surface landing. Otherwise, the outer hull is smooth and cool. At need, it can create hand and footholds for someone to climb and similar minor adjustments. However, overall hull form is set.

Power comes from an antimatter storage unit which is sufficient to operate all systems for a period of several years. This is storage, not generation, and must be replenished from time-to-time. Normally this is automatic, with the ship drawing power from an installation or parent vessel, or generating it by gravitic induction. It is also possible to absorb solar radiation. The fastest way to replenish the power storage unit is to make a close flyby of a hot star, combining induction and direct absorption. There is sufficient stored power that the Travellers need not concern themselves with it for the duration of the campaign. Likewise, jump fuel is stored in a pocket universe and teleported into the jump drive when needed. There is enough for the campaign and sometime thereafter, but if play continues the Travellers will eventually have to find a way to refill their pocket universe with liquid hydrogen.

Performance is an impressive 8G thrust and jump-6. The drive needs a few hours to reset after a jump, although this time can vary according to complex factors. Typically the ship will be ready to safely jump again 2D hours after emergence. The Referee may permit the Travellers to shorten that time with an increasing chance of a mishap. All functions are normally controlled from the command chamber but using it is more a matter of being prompted into the right frame of mind than necessity. A designated crewmember can carry out their duties from anywhere in the ship.

No subordinate craft or vehicles are carried but the lower deck is almost entirely configurable and could be used for this purpose if desired. Reconfiguring the lower deck is a matter of deciding what the user wants and willing the ship to make it happen. Absorbing and replacing a lot of fittings can take significant time, however. About one displacement ton per hour can be reconfigured. Minor systems such as sleeping pods can be set up in this time but it is not possible to add major items such as drives, weapons or screens.

WEAPONRY AND DEFENCES

The ship is armed with an annihilator and three particle lances. The latter are mounted in blisters set 120° around the hull from one another and need a direct line of sight to the target. The main weapon, an annihilator, is mounted in the nose of the ship and a set of defensive screens is built into the fabric of the vessel. The hull is armoured and constructed of highly resilient material which can self-repair. One hull point is regained per hour so long as the ship is still intact. If armour is lost, it is regained at the rate of one point per day. This may require replacement materials which can be salvaged from other Ancients vessels or installations.

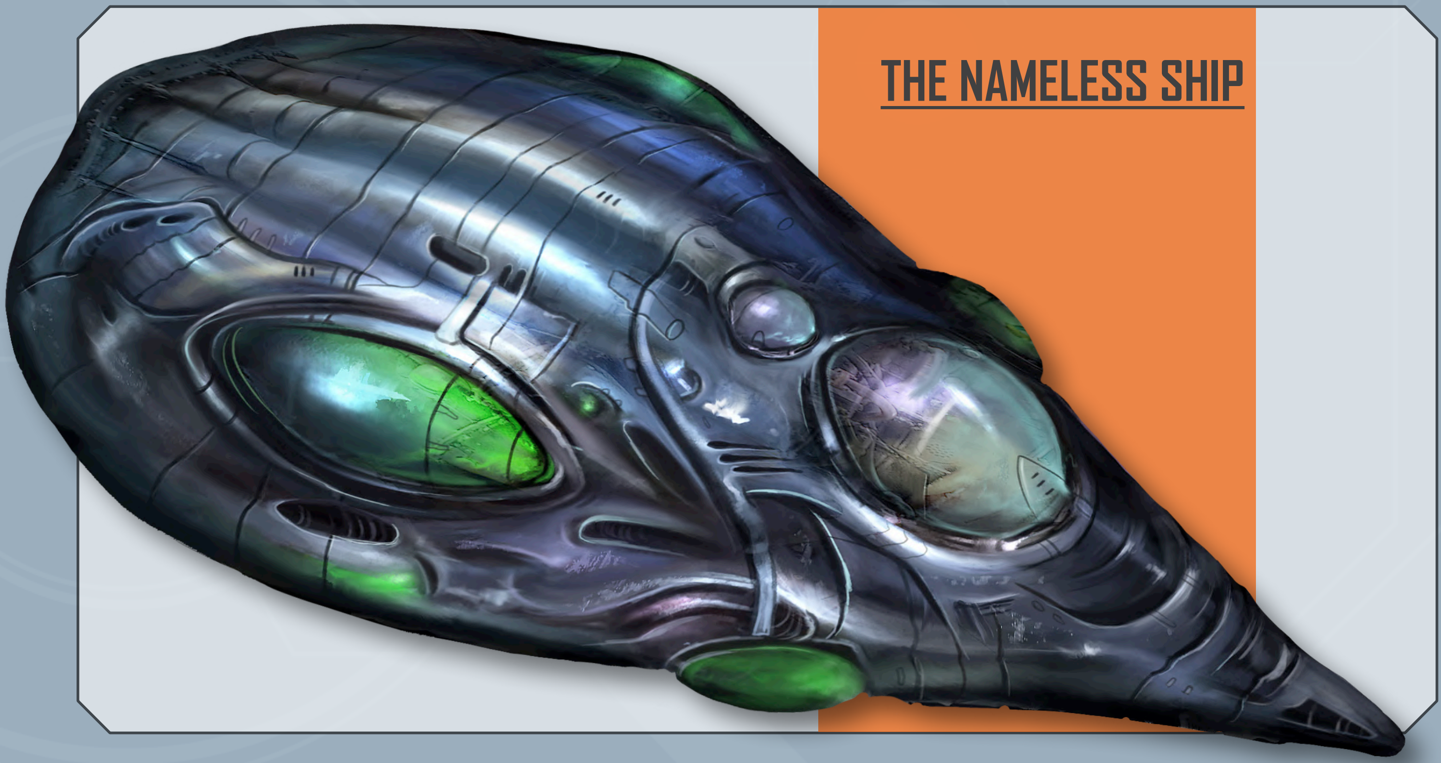
THE NAMELESS SHIP

TL25		Tonnage
Hull	400 tons, Sphere, Radiation Shielding, Superior Stealth	—
Armour	Molecular Bonded, Armour: 20	80
M-Drive	Thrust 8	16
Jump Drive	Jump 6	40
Power Plant	Antimatter, Power sufficient	20
Fuel Tanks	N/A	—
Bridge	Command Chamber, Psionic Interface	40
Computer	Core/1,000 Equivalent	—
Sensors	Extremely Advanced, Exotic (DM+4)	5
	Military Countermeasures Suite	—
	Enhanced Signal Processing	—
	Life Scanner Analysis Suite	—
Weapons	Annihilator	20
	Particle Lances x 3	15
Screens	Nuclear Interaction Field	4
	Proton Field	4
	Anti-Teleport Field	4
	Anti-Disintegrator Field	4
	Anti-Psionic Field	4
Systems	Ritual Chamber	40
Staterooms	Crew Chambers x2	40
Configurable Spaces		64

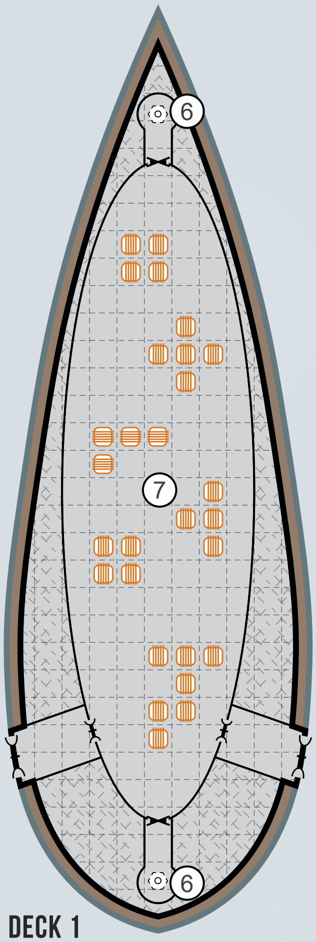
Hull: 160

Running Costs

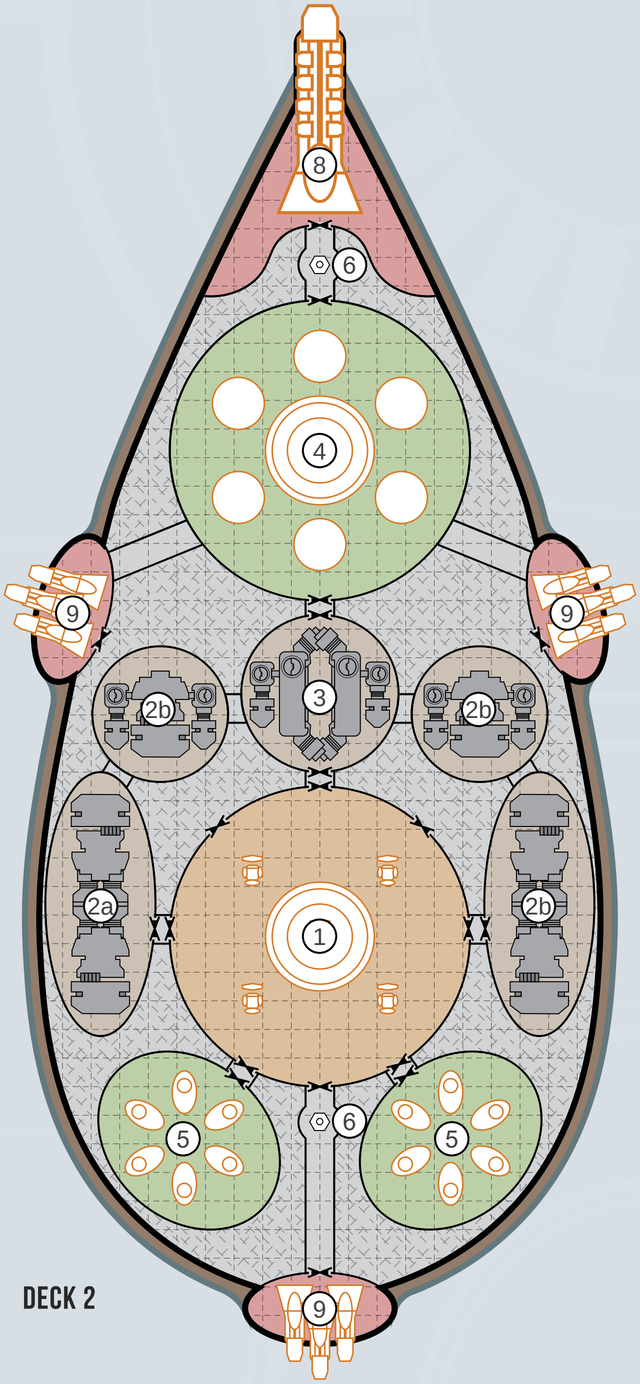
The price of this vessel is incalculable. There is no monthly upkeep cost as such, although actions may need to be taken.



1 square = 0.5 Ton



DECK 1


8
6
4
9
9
2b
3
2b
2a
1
2b
6
5
5
9

DECK 2

LEGEND

1. Command Chamber
2a. Drive Chamber (Manoeuvre)
2b. Drive Chamber (Jump)
3. Power Chamber
4. Ritual Chamber
5. Accomodation Areas
6. Grav Lift
7. Configurable Space
8. Annihilator
9. Particle Lances

Nameless Ship Weapons

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Traits
Annihilator	25	1 LS	2DD	Radiation
Particle Lance	25	Long	8D	Radiation

The annihilator is a more destructive version of a disintegrator. It is targeted using a psionic interface but the gunner still needs to make an attack roll. Range is limited by the ship's sensor capabilities, which can be augmented by a clairvoyant gunner or telepathically-linked observer closer to the target. Maximum range is about a light-second, or 300,000 kilometres. The annihilator performs similarly to a disintegrator and is opposed by disintegrator screens. If it penetrates the annihilator delivers damage to the target and creates an additional cloud of particles undergoing energetic disintegration. This translates into a great many small – by the standards of space combat – explosions. The weapon does its full damage (2DD) to the target in the form of disintegration and half damage (1DD) in a radius equal to 10 metres per point of damage inflicted. This is not disintegration damage; disintegrator shields have no effect on it but conventional defences do. The annihilation burst also causes a radiation pulse that can cause further damage to personnel and systems. The particle lances are line-of-sight weapons aimed by telepathic interface but otherwise act much like lower tech particle accelerators. They also produce a radiation pulse upon hitting the target.

The ship is also shielded against psionic attack, teleportation, disintegrator weapons, nuclear and particle weapons, and antimatter. This is typical of Ancients ships. They are, on the whole, capable of devastating whole fleets of lesser vessels but find it difficult to harm one another. Those who recognised this and developed alternative forms of attack generally did better in the Final War than those who did not.

UPPER DECK

The upper deck contains the vessel's control and living areas. Some machinery, especially field generators and some weapons, is embedded in the hull and its thick coating of armour. Weapons are housed in blisters; the annihilator is in the nose of the ship.

COMMAND CHAMBER (1)

The deck, and indeed the whole ship, centres on an ornately decorated command chamber with a high vaulted ceiling. The ship is directed from a central command podium, which rises out of the floor to carry the vessel's commander to a suitably lofty position. Rails and other furniture can be configured at the behest of the commander and the podium itself could be shaped to become a command chair, throne or even a bathtub. Reconfiguring takes an hour or so depending on the level of complexity.

Taking command of the vessel is carried out in the same manner as attuning a device. The vessel is not attuned when the Travellers find it and has a PSI 2D+6. When the Travellers enter the ship, the command system becomes aware of them and when the first enters the command chamber the ship chooses who to offer control to. This takes the form of a sort of telepathic invitation but a feeling rather than explicit words. It is similar to a friendly dog running up and obviously wanting to play. All the Travellers should make a Telepathy check. Anyone who does not have this talent may still make the check but uses only their PSI DM. Any Traveller who is on the Path of Dominance gains DM+2.

Whoever scores the highest is recognised as the ship's commander. They can choose to pass this honour to someone else if they please, once they have spent a little time familiarising themselves with the ship's way of working. The commander can authorise anyone they like to act as deputy commanders and assign duty stations to anyone they please. It is entirely possible to authorise everyone to do everything, although there is a possibility of confusing the ship.

The central podium is surrounded by smaller ones which are also configurable. These correspond to: Weapons, Drives, Navigation, Power, Internal Systems and a General control station which can be set up to control specific functions or perhaps part of the armament. The Navigation console governs both real-space navigation and operation of the ship's jump drive. All functions are telepathic but the Travellers can have their consoles extrude manual controls if this helps guide their thought processes.

When the Travellers attempt to control the ship, they will make checks just like aboard a more conventional vessel. However, it takes time to adjust to thinking instead of doing. The Travellers will suffer DM-2 on all checks connected with operating the ship for the first few days and may sometimes encounter a strange and unexpected effect, such as an attempt to accelerate the ship instead starting a spin, or causing all the lights on the upper deck to flash in a particularly irritating pattern.

DRIVE CHAMBERS (2)

The ship's manoeuvre and jump drives are distributed throughout the hull, with some critical components housed in a pair of beautifully decorated ovoid chambers flanking the command space. The drives can be controlled from consoles in these chambers but are more normally operated from the command area where the ship's commander can directly interact with the personnel responsible for them. The decoration in these chambers is as apparently abstract as elsewhere but evokes a sense of space and time which puts crewmembers in a frame of mind well-suited to plotting a jump or an in-system course. Allowing this to wash over a Traveller will, after a few minutes, grant DM+1 on all jump- or manoeuvre-related tasks.

POWER CHAMBER (3)

The power chamber contains an array of antimatter storage units and their control equipment. This is the physical heart of the ship. As elsewhere, it is richly decorated with swirling patterns in silver and grey. These can be altered by the Travellers once they have spent some time in the chamber and have allowed the patterns to become familiar. A Traveller can then inform the chamber what they want the patterns to represent by a sort of gentle empathic communion. The effects are likely to be disturbing on the first few attempts but eventually they will get the hang of it. The same process can be used elsewhere in the ship.

RITUAL CHAMBER (4)

The ritual chamber is the spiritual heart of the ship. The Travellers may have no use for it but to the Droyne who previously crewed the vessel this was the centre of their lives. The chamber is designed to allow the crew to perform rituals that would enhance their abilities to perform their tasks, the better to serve their Ancient master. The Travellers will likely find this chamber rather eerie or even threatening, as it is dedicated to the greatness of an Ancient. Its patterns evoke a sense of inferiority and a need for subservience which some Travellers will find annoying and others downright frightening. This can be altered once the Travellers are familiar with the process.

ACCOMMODATION AREAS (5)

There are two accommodation areas, each of which contains six sleeping pods and little else. The original crew had no need for recreation, personal possessions or privacy; serving their master was all they desired. The Travellers may find this unacceptable, in which case they can alter these areas as they please. The sleeping pods perform multiple functions, acting as an autodoc or emergency shelter as required. The pods can even be ejected by way of a tunnel opened through the hull and can keep the occupant alive – usually unconscious – for years.

GRAV LIFTS (6)

A grav lift at each end of the ship's working areas gives access to the lower deck. They are normally concealed behind a retractable wall to preserve the aesthetics of the command and ritual chambers.

LOWER DECK

The lower deck is made up almost entirely of configurable space. Other than the two grav lifts and airlock/ramps to the outside the entire space is open when the Travellers board the ship. They can instruct the vessel to reconfigure this area however they like, or leave it as cargo space. It is likely the Travellers will want cabins suited to their lifestyle and some sort of recreation and eating area, but they can do almost anything with this space. Figuring out that may be a step on the way to realising just how much control over their environment they are developing.

THE FIVE SISTERS SUBSECTOR

Part of this campaign takes place in the Five Sisters. It is a frontier region, separated from the rest of Imperial space by a neutral area including District 268 and the potentially hostile Sword Worlds Confederation. There is much speculation about the annexation of this subsector; notably the reasons behind it. Designated District 267 when Imperial expansion into the subsector began around 610, the region does not appear to have been considered particularly important. Plans to incorporate the neighbouring District 268 and create a link to the rest of the Imperium never really started and investment in the subsector dwindled to almost nothing around 800.

The timing of this loss of interest has provoked a great deal of comment. The Imperium was at that time engaged in the Psionics Suppressions and District 268 contained two worlds with major psionics-using Droyne populations. The subsector was transferred to naval control and remains a naval jurisdiction governed from the base at Iderati. There are four Scout Service installations in the subsector and seven naval bases. The navy does not comment on its basing strategy and whilst there is a case to be made for security of the 'Spinward Flank' there seems to be little justification for the expense of maintaining these installations.

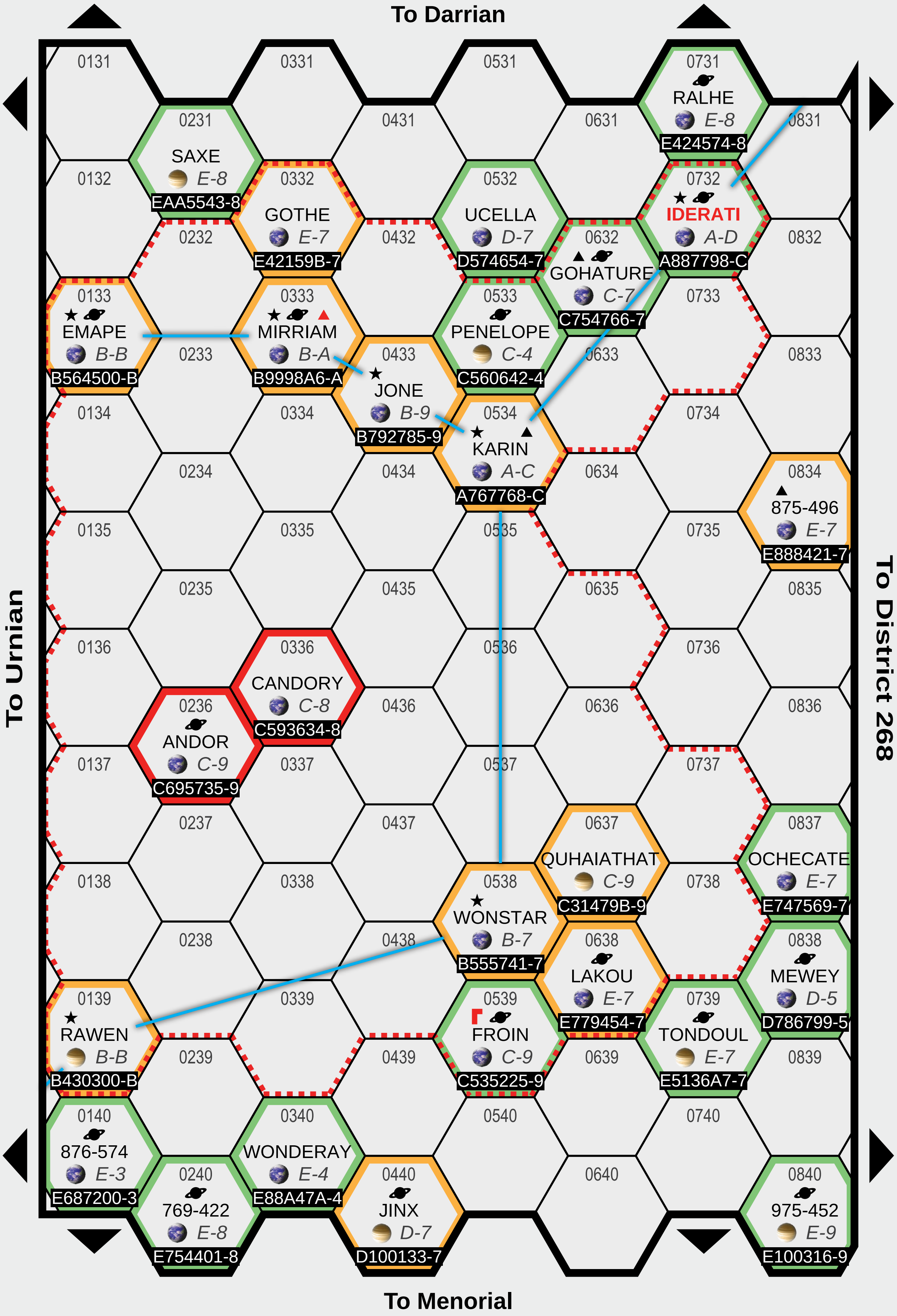
Some observers suggest that it is simply a matter of not admitting a mistake. The bases were authorised at a time when expansion into the Foreven sector may have seemed likely and once funds were allocated, the navy was not willing to accept it did not need them. Support for the allied Darrian Confederation is another option, as is the possibility the bases might be used as staging posts for a war against the Aslan Hierate. The Sword Worlds Confederation routinely cites the presence of naval installations in the Five Sisters as a provocation, a threat and proof that the Imperium intends to launch a surprise attack. There is some merit in all of these suggestions – some more than others – but comparing the naval infrastructure investment in this subsector to other areas with equivalent threats suggests the navy has overspent.

One popular explanation for the current situation is the Droyne of Andor and Candory. Andor is a candidate for the 'lost home' of the Droyne and may hold secrets that could threaten the Imperium. The way the navy's bases seem to surround Andor and Candory could be coincidence and the overstrength subsector fleet also has a mundane explanation – the Five Sisters is an isolated frontier region which needs additional security forces. However, this does not explain the strength of the blockade flotilla at Andor. Most interdicted worlds are assigned a patrol ship or two; some are worth a task force centred on a carrier or cruiser. Andor, however, has been assigned a battleship or dreadnought ever since the interdiction was put in place. The navy does not respond to queries as to why.

The Five Sisters contains 27 star systems. Of these, 13 are fully Imperial territory. The Imperium also claims Andor and Candory, and restricts access to them. These worlds are governed by Oytripin of Droyne and have never agreed to being part of Imperial territory. Indeed, there is no indication the Droyne have ever acknowledged the claim nor responded to it in any way. The remaining 12 star systems lie outside the Imperial border, although two have client status.

The subsector is protected by the 208th Fleet, whose headquarters is at Iderati. The fleet is somewhat overstrength for any subsector, let alone one only partially Imperial territory. In addition, elements of the Spinward Marches sector fleet are based in the Five Sisters. These vessels undertake patrols into adjoining subsectors and provide the ships necessary for the Andor and Candory blockade flotillas, systems technically part of the subsector fleet's jurisdiction but very rarely visited by vessels under subsector command. This is another indication that there is something special about this region.

FIVE SISTERS SUBSECTOR


To Darrian
To Urnian
To District 268
To Menorial
0731 RALHE E-8 E424574-8
0231 SAXE E-8 EAA5543-8
0332 GOTHE E-7 E42159B-7
0532 UCELLA D-7 D574654-7
0732 ★ IDERATI A-D A887798-C
0632 ▲ GOHATURE C-7 C754766-7
0133 ★ EMAPE B-B B564500-B
0333 ★ ▲ MIRRIAM B-A B9998A6-A
0533 PENELOPE C-4 C560642-4
0433 ★ JONE B-9 B792785-9
0534 ★ ▲ KARIN A-C A767768-C
0834 ▲ 875-496 E-7 E888421-7
0336 CANDORY C-8 C593634-8
0236 ANDOR C-9 C695735-9
0637 QUHAIATHAT C-9 C31479B-9
0837 OCHECATE E-7 E747569-7
0538 ★ WONSTAR B-7 B555741-7
0638 LAKOU E-7 E779454-7
0838 MEWEY D-5 D786799-5
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0539 FROIN C-9 C535225-9
0739 TONDOUL E-7 E5136A7-7
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0240 769-422 E-8 E754401-8
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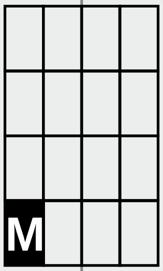


★ Imperial Navy Base
▲ Imperial Scout Base
▲ Imperial Scout Way Station
⚑ Research Station

🟩 Secure System
🟧 Amber Zone
🟥 Red Zone
— X-Boat Route
┅ Imperium Border

B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
● Planet (Water Present)
● Planet (Dry)
● Gas Giant

INTERDICTION OPERATIONS

Both the Andor and Candory systems are completely off-limits to unauthorised traffic. Permits to visit are available but requirements to obtain one are deliberately tortuous. Officially, applications can only be made at Iderati and are usually rejected out of hand. There may be other ways to get a permit but the bottom line is that unless the Imperial authorities want someone to visit these worlds they are highly unlikely to be allowed.

The Droyne of these worlds are not restricted in their movements, although they seem to be for the most part content to remain in their own systems. The Oytripin of Andor and Candory possess and can build TL9 starships, and are occasionally visited by vessels from Oytripin possessing more advanced technology. Droyne vessels are not impeded no matter where they are from. It is not clear whether they are challenged or if any response is made.

All other ships are challenged and required to identify themselves. All non-Droyne vessels, without exception, are boarded and the crew questioned. This includes the flotilla's own supply and support vessels unless they arrive according to a prearranged schedule. Any vessel that arrives without a permit and valid reason to be in-system is considered suspicious. In a few cases the intruder is escorted to a navy tanker, refuelled and ordered out of the system. More commonly the crew are arrested and transported to a naval base for investigation. Ships are sent to a base – not necessarily the same one – for detailed inspection. Simply entering the system is an offence, so unless a vessel has an excuse such as a misjump its owner and crew will be in a great deal of trouble.

The Andor interdiction flotilla is centred on a capital ship, usually supported by one or two cruisers and a carrier. A significant force of smaller vessels is also maintained, mostly capable fleet destroyers. A regular rotation of support ships maintains contact with navy bases in the region and keeps ships fully supplied. It is common for the flagship to be a Tigress dreadnought; the Imperium's newest and most capable capital ship. Occasionally a battleship is deployed instead. The same vessels tend to return to the blockade squadron over and over again, as if the Imperial Navy wants to limit the number of personnel who know what goes on at Andor. It has been speculated that those assigned here receive some kind of special training or are carefully selected, which would explain the use of the same crews and vessels.

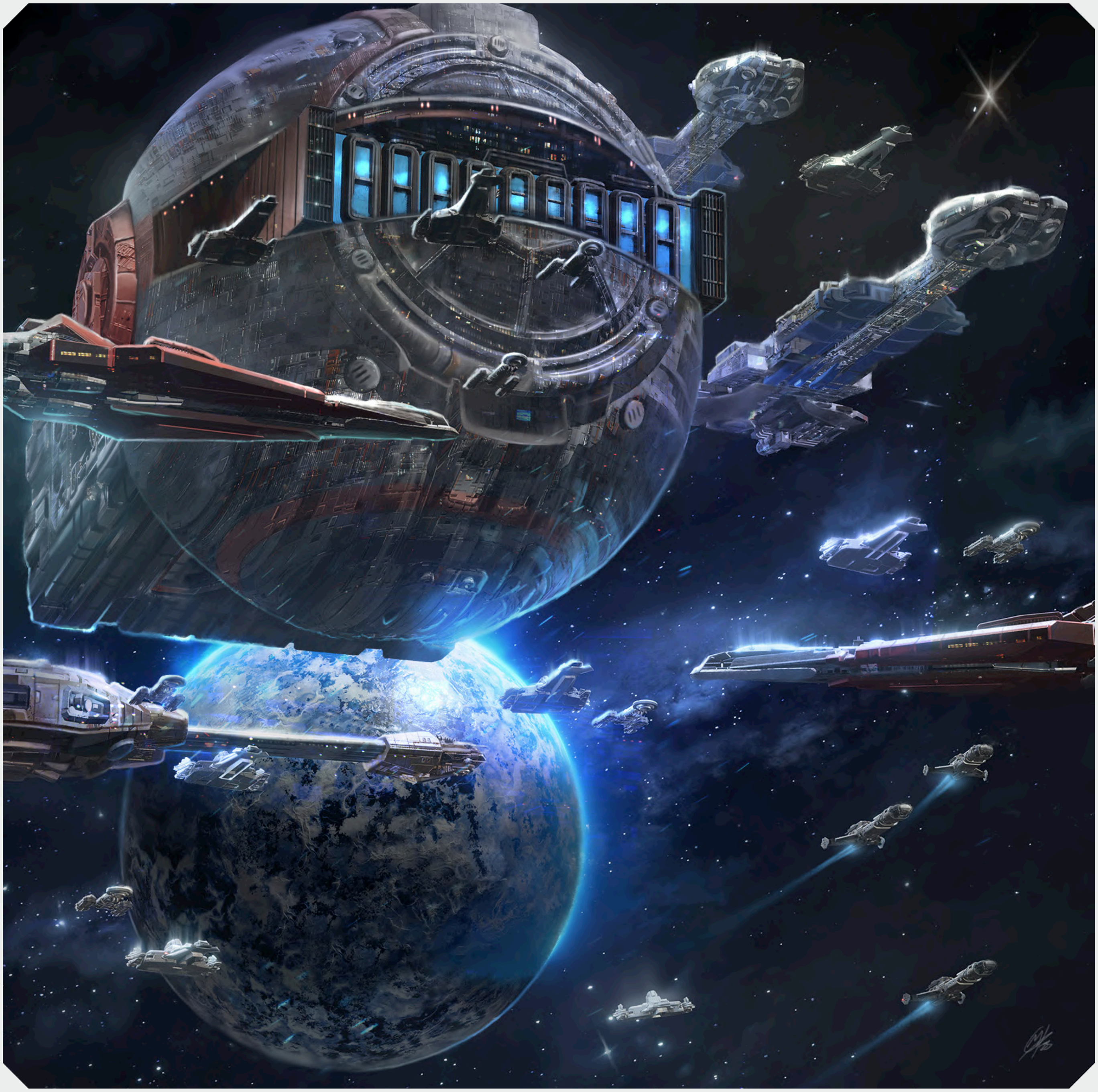
The flotilla at Candory is not as powerful as that at Andor. The flagship is usually a heavy cruiser, although sometimes a fleet carrier or second-class battleship might be substituted. There are usually two cruisers and a significant destroyer force in-system and when the flagship is not a carrier a light or strike carrier is added to the flotilla. The presence of these vessels ensures a broad coverage of all approaches to the mainworld and the ability to 'eyeball' any approaching vessel as early as possible.

The interdiction process is not limited to the mainworlds. Outsystem planets are monitored by satellites and routinely visited by patrols. Full searches of these planets are not uncommon, to the point where the navy seems to be obsessed with ensuring no-one sets up a base in the system. Vessels suspected of possessing the 3-parsec jump capability needed to reach the two interdicted systems are searched upon leaving any starport in range.

There is much speculation about the need for all this security, especially as it is clearly not intended to keep the Droyne in or to prevent them from contacting others. The reality is that there is no one specific reason and that the interdiction serves a number of purposes. Given the Imperial suspicion of psionics it is considered wise to prevent citizens from visiting the Oytripin of Andor and Candory in order to pester the Droyne for training. There are other Oytripin in Imperial space which do not receive this level of attention but these are special for other reasons.

The Imperium has long suspected Andor of being the original Droyne homeworld and thus in some way special. The blockade fleet is intended to prevent other non-Droyne states from carrying out diplomacy with the Droyne and to facilitate Imperial contact. Droyne officials routinely visit the Andor flagship, although what is discussed there is a closely guarded secret. The Oytripin do not trade with the Imperium and no technology transfers have apparently taken place.

The most important task for the blockade flotilla is to keep Zhodani agents away from Andor and Candory. Requests for an official visit by Zhodani ambassadors are politely refused or drowned under a tide of counter-requests and conditions, and since entering Imperial space without permission would be an act of war the Zhodani Consulate must abide by the interdiction. This does not preclude sneaking agents in to make contact, of course. The Imperial mistrust of psionics is such that it is considered highly undesirable to allow the Droyne of Andor and the Zhodani to talk to one another, telepathically or otherwise.



ANDOR

Andor is a small world with a dense atmosphere and conditions considered ideal for the evolution of a species like the Droyne. It is one of three terrestrial worlds in the system. There are three gas giants and no planetoid belts. The system has an unusual status; it is 'within Imperial territory' but not part of the Imperium. This means that the people of Andor do not have any say in the governance of the Imperium – not that they are likely to want it. The mainworld is autonomous but the rest of the system is within Imperial jurisdiction.

There are many legal complexities surrounding Andor, which are simplified by the presence of a naval task force. The Imperial claim to the system as a whole makes it lawful for Imperial Navy warships to search, turn away or even fire upon vessels in the system. The exact nature of Andor's relationship with the Imperium does not matter all that much if none but Imperial ships can approach it.

The population of Andor is officially listed as 60 million but this is at best an estimate. Likewise, the Tech Level and government types are estimates and attempts to shoehorn an alien society into standard database codes. In reality, Andor has a planetary government in the form of a single Oytrip (community) which governs all settlements and populations. There are several cities, most of which have never been visited by humans, and populations living in the countryside.

ANDOR

UWP C695735-9

Starport	Routine
Size	9,600km
Atmosphere	Dense; Tainted
Hydrosphere	50%
Population	Tens of millions
Government Type	Self-Perpetuating Oligarchy
Law Level	Personal concealable weapons prohibited
Technology Level	Anti-Gravity

The available Tech Level appears to be 9, with grav vehicles and basic starships available. The former are extensively used but Andor produces few starships. Some of those that do exist are thought to incorporate more advanced components, perhaps Ancients artefacts. These are not warships, although vessels may be armed, and Andor is generally considered to be more or less defenceless. That is not, however, the case.

Andor holds many secrets. It was indeed the birth-world of the supergenius Yaskoydray and the place where what are now called the Droyne evolved. The few who know this do not suspect that Yaskoydray kept a small population separate and programmed them for selective breeding. They still exist, living a simple life in a remote area and hidden in plain sight, as there are numerous other rural populations which are outwardly identical. There has been virtually no interbreeding between the main population and the rural; both groups find the idea inexplicably repugnant. This appears to be a result of Yaskoydray's programming of his servitors rather than physical reasons but the effect is the same.

Only the highest leaders in the Oytrip of Andor know about the special population, or even that their species evolved on Andor. The existence of numerous Ancients artefacts is more widely known but still a closely guarded secret. Outwardly, Andor is protected by a few TL9 weapons emplacements and a large number of Warriors who would die to defend their community. These are backed up by vastly more potent weapon systems left behind by the Ancients; disintegrators, annihilators and meson weapons are concealed within the cities along with exotic defences. These include a mass teleporter which can put a significant striking force aboard an unshielded vessel at orbital distances.

The cities of Andor are wonders by human standards, despite them being rated at a lower Tech Level than many nearby worlds. Narrow spires, curving exotically to improbable heights suggest advanced materials or gravitic assistance. The wide spaces between are rarely crossed by roads; grav vehicles are common and many Droyne fly under their own power between the towers of their cities. Some of the land between is given over to parks and orchards, with other areas allowed to grow wild.

The few offworld visitors permitted on Andor have universally been struck by how orderly society is. Every function is assigned to members of a particular caste and rank within that caste. Tasks are completed without fanfare and receive no praise. Everyone, in short, does what is expected of them as a matter of course. Another factor is the silence. Machinery in general is quiet if not completely silent and individuals make little noise. Some communication is telepathic but even when speech is necessary it is short and to the point. Those used to the blaring music and attention-grabbing sounds of the typical starport concourse might find Andor eerily quiet.

Also absent are the trappings of consumerism. There is not one piece of advertising to be seen, for the very good reason that there is nothing for sale. The Oytrip instructs its members to make what is needed and an item is transferred to the user for the duration of a task. Everything a Droyne needs is provided by the Oytrip and individuals have no desire for anything not given to them in this way. 'Could sell (whatever) to a Droyne' is a figure of speech in certain quarters but it is entirely spurious; nobody can sell anything to the people of Andor and none of them has anything for sale.

This does make things awkward for visitors who expect to rent a room and buy their meals. Diplomatic visitors are looked after by the Oytrip and their needs met. Anyone else is an intruder to be hunted down and at the very least removed from the planetary surface. There is no preferential treatment to be had, no extra information to be bought and no corruption of the usual sort. It might be possible to find a Leader whose ideas about what is best for the Oytrip can be exploited but the rest of the population follow their Leaders blindly and cannot comprehend ideas like free will or individuality.

THE FALL OF ANDOR

Tsyamoykyo knows that Andor was the birthplace of Yaskoydray. He knows about the special population kept hidden among the rural communities on Andor, a backup plan in case Yaskoydray needed to clone a new body or wanted to undertake additional research. Tsyamoykyo himself has done so, attempting to create an even more super-supergenius. This experiment was a messy failure, possibly because it used modern Droyne who were far removed from the special circumstances – whatever they were – that resulted in Yaskoydray.

As he moves towards galactic domination, Tsyamoykyo wants to obtain all of Yaskoydray's abilities and ensure his rivals cannot create new bodies for themselves from the special population. His plan was uncharacteristically direct but he was emboldened by the pathetic nature of the opposition. A few clunky TL15 cruisers and a trivial dreadnought could mount no opposition to his ships and the defences of Andor were scarcely more potent… or so he thought.

Tsyamoykyo's strike force emerged from jump and accelerated towards the blockade flotilla, engaging with all weapons before the Imperials had even reached their battle stations. It was over in minutes; the dreadnought smashed in half and the cruisers broken into pieces. Some ships were completely atomised; aboard others the crew succumbed to intense radiation or simply died. A destroyer attempted to jump out and was chastised; a supply ship surrendered and was granted 10 extra seconds of existence. Aboard his command ship Tsyamoykyo exulted. This was a puny force but that made the victory all the sweeter. Not for him the hard-fought battle and respect of a worthy vanquished foe; for Tsyamoykyo warfare is about achieving total dominance and ensuring the enemy knows it.

As boarding parties of engineered creatures entered surviving ships to exterminate the crews, Tsyamoykyo sent his Warriors to capture a lucky few. They would be taken to his stronghold and later released to spread word of his greatness. In the meantime the fleet approached the planet and attacked without warning. Now Tsyamoykyo got a surprise. Andor's people had been preconditioned to achieve a stable TL9 and remain there and had apparently done so, yet they were not the defenceless primitives Tsyamoykyo had expected. Within their cities were potent shields and deadly weapons, and even if they did not know how to construct them the Droyne of Andor were quite capable of operating them.

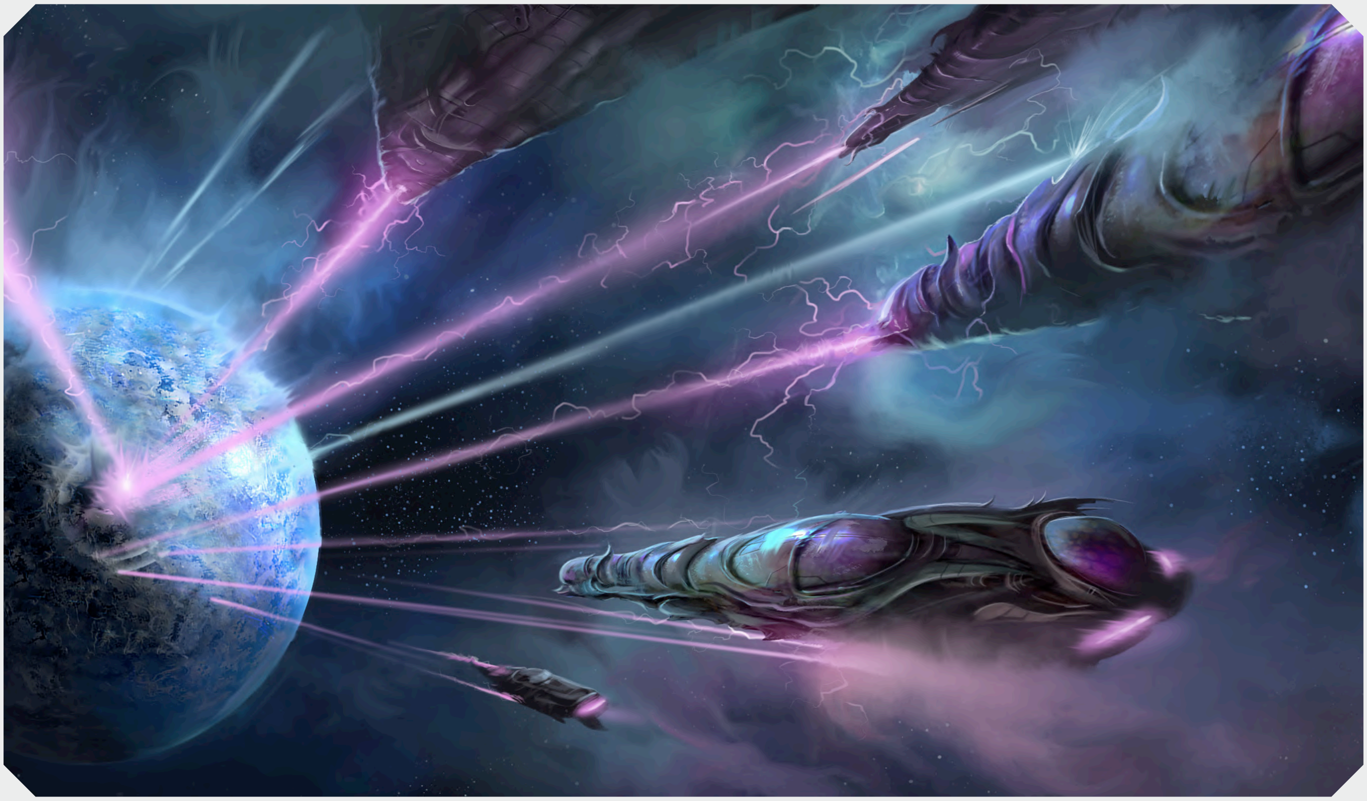
The Imperials had always suspected there was something untoward on Andor and now it was revealed. Antimatter missiles streaked upwards as annihilators lashed at the incoming fleet. Tsyamoykyo replied in kind, disintegrating entire cities. One continent was completely destroyed by planetbusters dropped on the surrounding tectonic plates; in his rage Tsyamoykyo came close to ripping the entire planet apart. The defenders sent up a horde of ships; primitive TL9 rattle-cans willingly piloted into a maelstrom of death to act as a screen for advanced interceptors. Some got through and Droyne warriors teleported onto the hulls of Tsyamoykyo's ships. They burned their way in, bypassing psionic and teleport shields.

The battle for Andor was fought with everything from annihilators to knives and the Droyne of Andor died bravely. None flinched from any sacrifice whilst there was a Leader left to direct their actions. It was all in vain, of course. The Imperial flotilla had been swept aside in 16 minutes; Andor itself fell in just over an hour. When it was done there were craters where cities had been and a continent wracked by extinction-level lava flows. Tsyamoykyo pounded Andor long after its inhabitants could no longer fight back. He did not intend to inflict such destruction but their effrontery in damaging his ships could not go unpunished.

Tsyamoykyo's fleet landed troops in some places. Resistance was swept aside and surviving Ancients artefacts removed. The plundering was thorough but it was not the primary aim; that was to secure as much of the special population as possible, for experimentation and backup bodies. The rest were massacred. This was not the impersonal genocide of bombardment but thousands of individual executions. Tsyamoykyo bore the Myoyux (see page 16) no malice, of course; they had not put up any sort of fight. He simply needed them removed from the universe, so he destroyed a world to do it.

All this happened about 36 hours ago. News will not have reached any other system. It is possible that a regular supply ship or returning patrol vessel might happen by but even so there will be no assistance for the surviving Droyne of Andor – not that they would ask for any. This is a disaster that is still happening; buildings are still collapsing and fires are raging out of control. All actions taken by the Travellers are against this backdrop.

The Travellers will be able to piece together what happened as they investigate and interact with survivors. The scale of the destruction is enormous and the Referee should show the Travellers parts of it at a time. They may be shocked at the annihilation of the blockade flotilla, only to realise that is the tip of the proverbial iceberg. When they realise what Tsyamoykyo came here to do the Travellers will get some insight into his nature – he is capable of clinically planning an extermination and carrying it out without remorse but resistance moves him to a vicious rage in which he becomes deliberately cruel.



TALES FROM THE FALL OF ANDOR

Getting to Andor might be a challenge if the Travellers do not possess a 3-parsec ship. There are no commercial flights, so the Travellers might have to blag their way onto a military support ship or pay smugglers to take them. However, it is likely the Travellers will have their own transport. However they arrive, the Travellers are in for a shock. Seconds after jump emergence, sensor data begins flooding in, triggering alarms and emergency procedures all through the ship. The Travellers will be bombarded with noise and information, all of it urgent.

Collision Alarm! The ship's sensors have detected solid objects large enough to endanger the ship on a collision course.

Distress Signals! Multiple distress signals are being received from different sources.

Combat in Progress! A blanket 'stay away' signal is being broadcast from several ships. This is a standard Imperial Navy protocol when combat is imminent or ongoing.

Sensor Disruption! Powerful emissions from the vicinity of the mainworld are disrupting communications and sensors.

Antimatter Detonation! Antimatter weapons have recently detonated nearby.

Charged Particle Field! A charged particle field like that created by an annihilator is currently consuming matter nearby and causing secondary explosions.

IMMEDIATE THREATS

The most immediate threat is collision. The Travellers' ship came out of jump with some residual momentum. This is entirely normal but will result in the ship smashing through a debris field at some speed. Damage is inevitable. An Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check indicates the field is a mix of large and small metallic fragments, with some very large chunks. These are larger than the Travellers' ship and irregular in shape. There are energy emissions from these larger pieces and in some cases indications of explosions or fires within. The obvious inference is that these are parts of a large starship. Effect 4+ allows the Travellers to identify the pieces as almost certainly being a Gionetti light cruiser – or what is left of one.

The smaller fragments pose little threat to the Travellers' ship but they must avoid collision with the larger ones. Repulsors and tractor systems can push aside a lot of the debris but attempting to push something more massive than the Travellers' ship will result in their ship being bounced away which might result in another collision. There are various ways this can be done, especially if the Travellers have an Ancients vessel under their command. Under normal conditions the ship could be piloted around the wreckage without undue difficulty but interference from the nearby particle field interferes with sensors and possibly controls.

The Travellers' ship is headed straight for a section of the cruiser's spinal mount at quite a high closing speed. There are other large chunks of debris, including some very large hull segments, nearby. This means that a course change might result in a worse crash. There is insufficient time to cancel the Travellers' velocity but they can shed some or attempt to skim past. There is time for two piloting actions, during which the rest of the Travellers can take other measures.

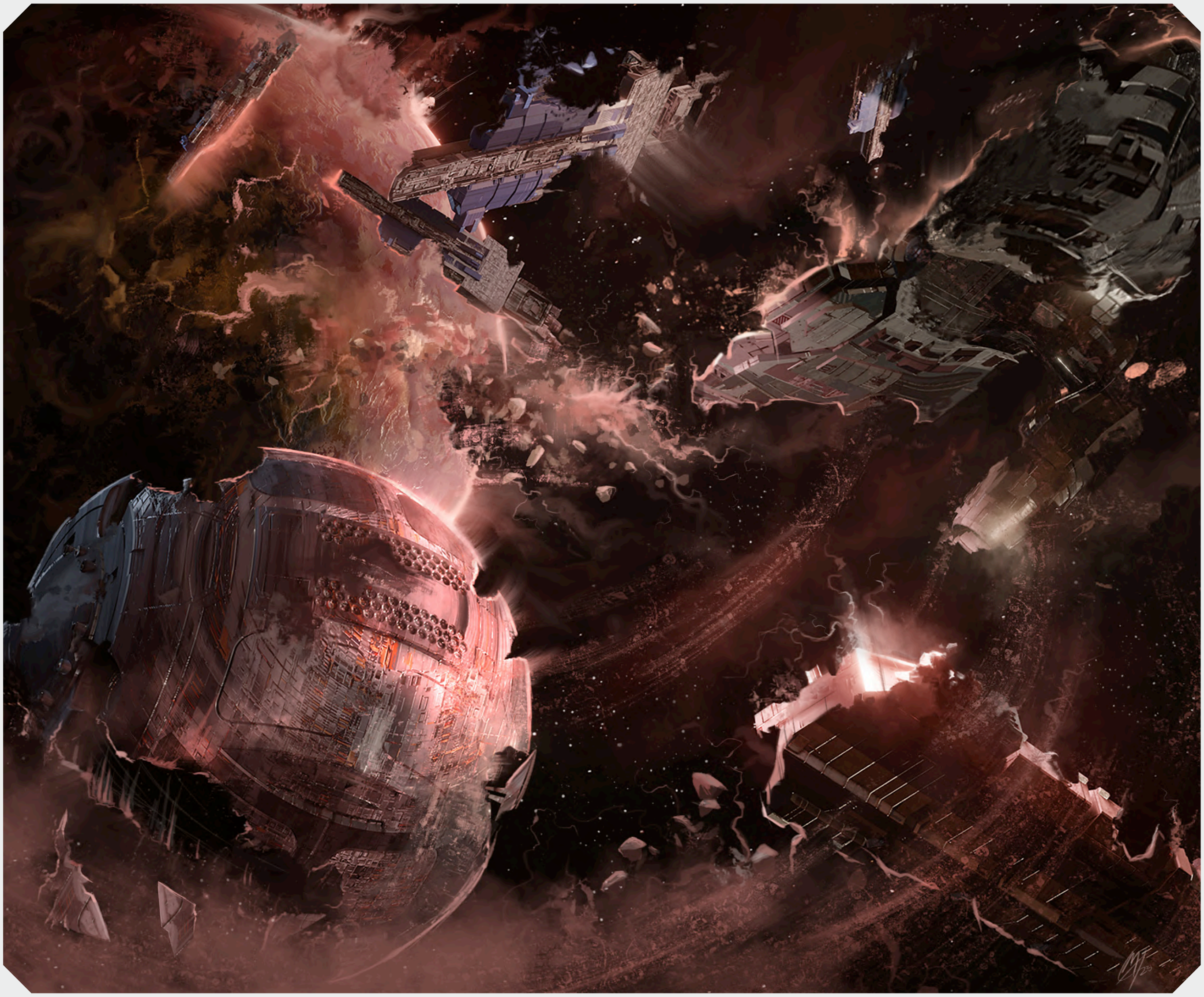
The Travellers' closing velocity is rated 20; this is the amount of dice of damage their ship and whatever it hits will take. The Travellers' actions can mitigate this and if they can reduce it to 0 there will be no collision. Each round, the pilot can apply thrust to attempt to avoid a collision or to slow the ship down. Thrust can be split between these two actions. Each point of Thrust employed to mitigate the collision reduces closing velocity by -1. In addition, Thrust may be applied as a DM in an attempt to avoid a collision.

Due to sensor interference it is difficult to be sure whether or not there is additional wreckage beyond the immediately threatening piece. In fact there is, so additional measures will have to be taken if the Travellers are to avoid a collision. If they hit the debris, this will reduce their velocity sufficiently that it is possible to gently fly out of the wreckage field without further checks.

This scene can play out in a variety of ways. If it is treated as a standard shiphandling challenge the Travellers can make their Pilot checks and hope for the best. However, this is a chance for the Travellers to start thinking beyond the mundane. They are developing enormous powers but may still have the habits of ordinary people. For example, the Travellers might become frustrated that they cannot see much with their ship's sensors and realise that they can see the way ahead using clairvoyance. The Referee should encourage the use and development of psionic and special abilities from this point on, rewarding those who embrace their new abilities. The Effect of a successful Clairvoyance check could be granted as an additional DM to the pilot attempting to avoid a collision, assuming the Traveller passes on information in a meaningful manner.

AVOIDING COLLISION

Completely avoiding a collision is possible but requires a rather violent course change. The pilot has two chances to attempt this. Both require a Pilot check; the first is Very Difficult (12+) and the second Formidable (14+). If the pilot can somehow generate a combined Effect 6+ from these two checks the Travellers' ship changes vector enough to miss the main debris chunks. Effect 1–5 results in clipping the wreckage, doing half the damage that would result from a head-on collision. A combined total of Effect 0 or less means the Travellers' ship hits the wreckage for full damage.



There are other ways a Traveller could assist. Skilled use of sensors or power systems will grant additional DMs as always but it is possible to go beyond the mundane. A Traveller on the Path of Knowledge might take a few seconds to predict the drift patterns of wreckage from a known starting point – an intact cruiser – and create a mental model of likely hazard locations which will assist the pilot. Creative use of new or existing abilities should be rewarded, enabling situations early in the campaign to act as a tutorial for the final battle.

Using repulsors or similar systems is a mixed blessing. Brute-force use of repulsors at the last minute will reduce the effective closing velocity by -4 but the size of the wreckage is such that the Travellers' ship will be bounced away on a new trajectory which may lead into further danger. More subtle use, such as deflecting debris or widening a gap just a little, will be more effective. The same applies to other measures, like blasting a hole through the wreckage with disintegrators. Brute-force methods will have a marginal result but if the Travellers are clever they can use various means to make the passage easier.

The Travellers can help one another out, for example by trying to get more sensor data or an idea of the wreckage layout, or cleverly playing the particle lances over the wreckage to cause minor explosions which push the chunks apart. If they manage to bring their ship to a stop relative to the debris, by somehow shedding 20 dice worth of velocity, then they can fly carefully through. The Referee should encourage creativity and the use of special abilities, and reward Travellers who come up with something clever.

In the event of a collision everyone aboard takes the same damage on the Ground scale as the ship would on its scale – starting at 20D and reducing for the measures taken. This is halved for anyone strapped into a proper crash frame or protected by an Ancients ship's advanced inertia damping system. Personal kinetic shields and other measures will further mitigate damage. There is a possibility that the Travellers might end up completely destroying their ship but surviving. This is unlikely if they think fast and try hard but if it happens, it happens. The Travellers will need to find another vessel to carry on the campaign. There might be lifeboats in the wreckage which could be used to reach Andor and there are ships planetside that might be co-opted.

THE FLEET IS GONE!

Once the Travellers have dealt with the immediate threat they can start taking stock. Clearly there has been a space battle off Andor, although perhaps 'massacre' might be a better word. The wreckage of at least three cruiser-sized vessels and dozens of smaller ships can be identified if the Travellers want to take long enough. Some of the wrecks are still broadcasting distress calls or combat warnings but there is no response to communications from any of them. Most have been blasted apart by antimatter weapons or disintegrators and there are free-floating clouds of particles around most of them which continue to decay.

One of the cruisers is slowly disintegrating before the Travellers' eyes. It appears to have been hit with a persistent disintegrator field or something similar. However, what really catches their attention is about half of a Tigress dreadnought slowly spinning away from the battle site. The other half is just… gone, probably broken up by antimatter detonations and annihilated by collisions with charged particle clouds. Energy spikes suggest explosions deep within the hull. Some sections are venting water and air.

There is a weird signal emanating from deep within the remains of the Tigress. It does not register on any sensors the Travellers are using and after a moment they will realise it is a broadband psionic distress call. Non-psions will experience it too, as a sort of 'pull', like a weak psionic suggestion. Telepaths will be aware of more details. The mind sending out the call is wounded and desperate, and does not feel human. Those who have experienced Droyne thought patterns will realise they are dealing with a Droyne. This raises the question of why this being is aboard an Imperial warship. Are they an attacker? Prisoner? It is not possible to make telepathic contact for some reason.

ENTERING THE DREADNOUGHT

The Travellers might shrug and move on. If they do, so be it. The Referee should not railroad them in any direction even if this means they miss a chance for an uplift or other advantage. This campaign rewards curiosity and creativity, and those who display neither will be less successful. If the Travellers do investigate the wreck, more information becomes available. The ship is obviously shattered, with most areas open to space. There is power in some sections and survivors are a possibility. However, sensors will only reach so deep into the wreck and some areas are curiously blank. There is a definite anomaly just inboard of the fighter launch and recovery bay, as if the ship has been modified in some way.

The anomalous area is surrounded by the most intact part of the vessel. Travellers who think to look for the right emissions will find that this area is protected by an anti-disintegrator field and proton shield. These are not technologies possessed by the Imperium, suggesting an Ancients artefact is aboard or built into the vessel. The anomalous area is also shielded against teleportation and has a psionic shield. This is not associated with a living mind so far as the Travellers can tell.

Entry to the remains of the vessel presents some problems. Most of the exposed internal areas are surrounded by a charged particle field resulting from disintegrator attacks. This would be fatal for exposed personnel and may extend deep into the ship. It would be possible to land on the intact parts but the vessel's thick armour makes finding an entry point difficult. The launch and landing area presents the best option.

INS KINSHANU

INS Kinshanu is a Tigress dreadnought. Like her sister vessels she is named for a predator of great cunning and power. The kinshanu is an aquatic creature found on several worlds in the Vland and Corridor sectors, associated with sudden attacks from the depths and a penchant for luring hunters into confined areas where they can be ambushed.

The Tigress is a potent symbol of Imperial might, so seeing one carved more or less in half should shock the Travellers. It is obvious that *Kinshanu* was attacked with weapons beyond anything the Imperium or the Droyne of Andor would have available. They may recognise the effects of Ancients weapons and if they stop to think about that, the implications are dire. This is no missing patrol ship or overdue supply vessel. This is a direct attack on the pride of the Imperial fleet, and by the look of things it is irrelevant whether or not the Imperial Navy fought back at all.

How the Travellers make use of this is very much up to them. They could land on the outer hull and walk to a launch tube or recovery deck, or a small ship might be able land directly on the recovery deck. There are also maintenance hatches here and there. Determined Travellers will have no real problem getting inside.

The interior of the docking area is exposed to vacuum but beyond its internal airlock the Travellers will find at least some compartments have air and power. There are bodies everywhere, most of them vacc-suited. Cause of death varies; some did not get their suits on in time, some were killed by a radiation pulse that penetrated even the thick armour of a Tigress. Others were clearly slain in hand-to-hand combat, torn apart by claws and teeth – the Travellers have seen this before. In many cases cause of death is difficult to discern, as if the victim's life processes simply stopped.

It is clear the crew were depleted by external attack but attempted to resist a boarding, that much is clear. They have typical Imperial Navy weapons – snub pistols and submachineguns for the most part, with officers armed with gauss pistols. From the strike points and expended cartridges it is clear they put up a fight and in places there are marines with heavier weapons. They are dead, too, and internal damage suggests the situation was desperate enough that plasma weapons were fired inside the ship. The corpses are in many cases unpleasant and disturbing. Some died violently or from radiation. Some corpses have been partially eaten. Time of death seems to have been around 36 hours ago, which will be confirmed by any functioning equipment or if a copy of the vessel's logs can be obtained.

Security measures appear to have completely failed. All doors and airlocks are unsecured and will open automatically when someone approaches, even if there is hard vacuum on the other side. Likewise, most of the ship's systems are shut down. This includes all but the most basic components of the life support system. Air is circulated internally within compartments but there is no automatic sealing of areas that are breached. As a result most of the ship is in vacuum, although local power cells are keeping the lights and internal gravity on for now.

CRAFT OPERATIONS RECOVERY DECK (1)

Much of the small craft operations area is smashed up and open to space but the mid-level launch and recovery facilities are still more or less intact. This area has vented its air to space, so suits will be required. Damage is extensive throughout the section,

A LACK OF BODIES

The Travellers will find casualties throughout this area, although not as many as might have been expected. In some cases this is due to breaches which caused bodies to be ejected into space. However, in many cases crewmembers did not have time to reach their battle stations and were killed elsewhere in the ship. Only the standard crew was on duty, since at the time it was attacked the vessel was not expecting any sort of trouble.

although most of it is secondary. The flight operations section has taken hits from various weapons but no super-destructive ones. Internal explosions account for most of the damage.

The standard Tigress operates a large number of 50-ton small craft. Most sources state these to be fighters but in fact all Tigresses give over some of their capacity to shuttles and similar utility craft. *INS Kinshanu* has a higher than average percentage of utility craft, explained by a need to inspect visiting craft. Most shuttles and fighters are wrecked, many still locked in their transport and maintenance cradles. It seems that whatever took out the dreadnought did it so fast that most pilots never reached their craft.

There is no sign of a boarding in this part of the ship. However, it is clear that the recovery decks have been modified and expanded at the expense of some small craft capacity. On one of the recovery decks stands a craft which is clearly of Droyne origin (1a). It is closed up and powered down. The craft is nothing special; indeed by Imperial standards it is rather primitive. It is a 100-ton in-system shuttle, beautifully made but using TL9 materials. The docking area has been modified to accommodate such vessels, suggesting frequent visits. There is no-one aboard.

Within the craft operations area there are several control clusters, which have access to the ship's main computer network. Whilst physical security has been disabled the cyber security system is still intact, making it hard for the Travellers to immediately extract data. Breaking in would be a lengthy task, requiring several hours even if the Travellers have advantages such as the security keycards of nearby casualties. If they do manage it they can go over the data and gain an impression of what happened here and just how fast the flotilla was taken out.

There are two 50-ton craft in the recovery deck area, both standard Imperial Navy cutters, armed with a pulse laser but intended for utility and transport work. They are configured as general-purpose craft used to conduct patrols and boardings, or transport personnel and supplies planetside. One (1b) has clearly made a hard emergency landing after being on the periphery of a weapon hit. It is mangled and would be hard to enter, with little salvageable if anyone managed it. The crew of two are dead at the controls. The second (1c) is on overhead hoists. It was interrupted in the process of transfer to the handing area (2). It is uncrewed and could be put into service if the Travellers can restore functionality to the hoist system.

HANDLING CHAMBER (2)

Craft landing on the recovery deck are quickly inspected for safety issues then transferred by overhead clamp and hoist systems to the handling area. This can be considered a triage point, where craft are either sent straight to the ready area to be launched through the tubes on the decks below when needed, or to their docking area. Damaged craft or those due for maintenance are diverted to the hangars for work to be carried out. There is an emergency dump capability which will send the craft to a specialist launch tube. It will then be ejected from the ship under high acceleration. This is only done when craft pose a threat to the handling area or the dreadnought as a whole. An unstable power plant or weaponry would be the most likely reasons for this action.

One promising route into the ship is blocked by a fighter which appears to have suffered a control problem whilst being manoeuvred on its hoists towards the launch tubes (2a). Its drive has activated, which should not be possible on the hoist, tearing the craft loose and sending it across the handling area into the internal bulkhead. This suggests severe control interference or perhaps some kind of psionic attack on the crew causing them to take reckless and destructive actions. There is plenty of other wreckage and no survivors.

SUPPORT CHAMBERS (3)

Around the recovery deck is an area of utility and maintenance spaces. This is a warren of stowage areas, offices and workshops. Much of this area is breached or mangled beyond all recognition, making it difficult to find a clear passage through. The Travellers could pick up all manner of useful items here, from tool kits to gauss pistols, although there is a limit to how much they can carry. Of course, if they have powerful Ancients equipment the Travellers might find such primitive junk beneath their notice.

DAMAGE CONTROL LOCKER (4)

This chamber has thick bulkheads intended to help it survive even catastrophic damage to the vessel. It contains heavily armoured rescue suits and equipment for lifesaving and dealing with all manner of emergencies, including a small decontamination chamber. Almost none of the equipment has been removed from its mountings, further suggesting the crew were wiped out before even beginning damage control operations.

SECURITY AND RECEPTION CHAMBER (5)

Personnel entering the vessel from the recovery deck area would normally disembark after their craft had been transferred to its docking area and be met with appropriate ceremony – and security precautions. A modification to this particular vessel has created an entry chamber which acts as an airlock to the docking area. It has a security station but this seems to be more ceremonial than anything else; there are Imperial sunbursts everywhere along with busts of various emperors and prominent admirals. The colour scheme is also unusual, in that it mimics Droyne art more than Imperial Navy utility. There are gauss carbines in a discreet locker but no sign they have been accessed recently.

VACC SUIT CHAMBER (6)

Similar in general tone to the reception chamber, this area is set up for the storage and maintenance of vacc suits. Whilst the majority of stands are designed for human suits, some are configured for Droyne. One is particularly splendid, with a wide area around it kept open to allow underlings to assist their Leader in donning or removing a suit.

UTILITY AREAS (7)

Several utility areas flank the corridor. Oddly perhaps, these have been completely emptied of all equipment, machinery and even shelves. They are rarely used now. Only one contains anything of interest; the body of an Imperial Navy petty officer. It appears she was injured and sought the safety of a locked door. Once inside the chamber she put her back to the far wall and slowly expired, still clutching her snub pistol. Cause of death appears to be an intense pulse of radiation.

OUTER MODIFIED CHAMBER (8)

Several working and living areas have been removed and replaced with a circular chamber with three entrances. Décor is distinctly Droyne in character and there are no furnishings whatsoever. The wall patterns are meaningless and appear to be an attempt to duplicate Droyne art by someone with only a vague understanding of its nature. This whole section of the vessel has been enormously modified. An exit at the far side of the chamber would have led deeper into the ship before the corridor was blocked by wreckage. Another at the side of the chamber leads to a second modified area. All are sealed with iris valves and have retained structural integrity. The iris valve leading deeper into the ship displays danger codes indicating there is no atmosphere on the far side, whilst the other does not. However, it has been secured using additional emergency codes and is in an extreme lockdown posture.

If the Travellers think to use the communicator on the iris valve they will get an answer – see 'Diplomatic Embarrassment' on page 77. Telepathy and standard comms will not work. The valve can be disabled by getting into its electronics and creating a physical bypass, or perhaps by hacking its controls. Clever telekinetic manipulation of the locking mechanism would normally work but this valve is shielded against it – a technology the Imperium does not possess. Brute force, such as blasting holes with plasma guns, will work but might result in a violent reception on the other side.

DIPLOMATIC CHAMBER (9)

A second circular chamber has been created by modifying the dreadnought's structure. It is almost completely devoid of features except for a gorgeous conference table made from rare wood. On one side is a podium fit for a Droyne Leader-of-Leaders, with comfortable chairs designed for humans on the other. The décor is once again very 'Droyne' in nature and equally as meaningless as the other chamber… except for one small section. As the Travellers' gaze passes over it they feel a lurch, as if someone had taken their brain and given it a good shaking.

The Travellers are hit – hard – by a psionically induced vision. The décor has been altered in the past few hours to carry a resonance of what happened here. Any Traveller who makes a Difficult (10+) Interpret check gains an impression of a secret chamber on Andor, a Leader tasked with conducting diplomacy with the silly humans in orbit. Endless platitudes and fearful bluster, just like all the other times. Then chaos and fire, explosions on the hull and the ship tearing in half. A move towards the docking bay and a hurried retreat as the ship depressurised. Then… waiting for a response to the telepathic distress signal. No-one came and that is very bad indeed.

Within the chamber there are three humans and 12 Droyne. The leader of the humans wears the uniform of a flag-lieutenant and clutches a Navy Model gauss pistol. The others are senior petty officer armed with snub pistols, all in full ceremonial dress uniform. There is a Droyne Leader, resplendent in his regalia, with an attending Drone and Sport. Two Warriors flank them with plasma weapons aimed at the door. In front of them stand seven Technicians and Workers, arms interlocked, forming a living shield.

The Travellers will immediately note that although the Droyne are on one side of the room and the humans on the other, all are facing the only entrance with weapons drawn. Whatever attacked the ship was seen as a mutual threat. Depending on the mode of their entrance and any disorientation from the psionic trigger artwork, the Travellers might face hostility or trigger an exchange of fire. How this plays out is dealt with under Diplomatic Embarrassment on page 77.

OVOID BULKHEAD (10)

The two circular chambers are surrounded by a thick bulkhead that, although dented and twisted, has maintained its integrity. This might strike the Travellers as odd if they know much about starship construction, as it would surely have been subjected to the same stresses as the rest of the area. It is not possible to scan the other side of the bulkhead by any means, psionic or conventional. If the Travellers take the time to closely investigate the bulkhead they will finds its outer layer is conventional but underneath is an exotic alloy. It is not of the same composition as that used by the Ancients but appears to be a crude attempt to replicate it. There are fields running through this layer – anti-psionic, anti-teleport and some kind of kinetic protection field. These technologies are not available to the Imperial Navy but Omicron Division might have access to them.

DATA FROM THE FLOTILLA

Getting through the layers of security and encryption in the dreadnought's computers is a big job and would ordinarily be near-impossible. However, the Travellers have the advantage that personnel were logged in at terminals deep in the ship, bypassing some of the outer security layers. With the assistance of extreme-tech Ancients computing it will be possible to download the data files and break into them at leisure. This is likely to take 2D hours, reduced (or increased) by the Effect of a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check. TL15 security simply cannot withstand the problem-solving power of an Ancients computer.

Once they get in, the Travellers will be able to watch the attack unfold from many viewpoints. Internal security cameras, damage readouts and external sensor stations all tell of a rapid and overwhelming assault followed by systematic execution of most survivors. The remainder were taken away, presumably to the attackers' ships.

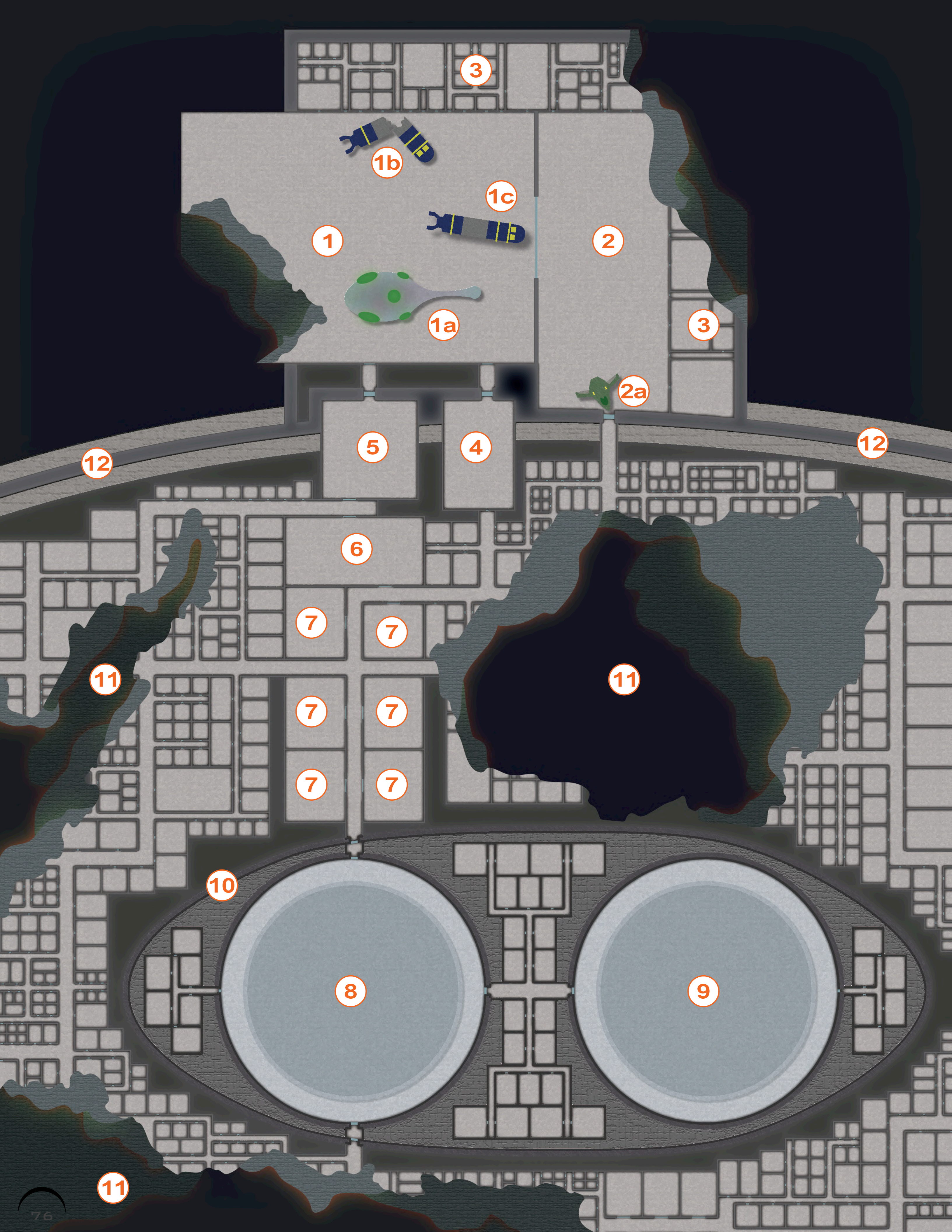
The area within the bulkhead once contained living and utility spaces but has been converted to various discreet diplomatic-support chambers. These contain wine, various delicacies and an array of other items the Imperial Diplomatic Corps thought might be useful. There are spare chairs, even a podium which was removed once it was deemed useless. Serving-robots wait in their alcoves to deliver refreshments. Most of what is stored has never been used.

WRECKAGE ZONES (11)

There are several areas where the ship's structure has collapsed or become so distorted that passage is impossible without cutting equipment. Most of the ship – the parts that remain, anyway – has similar wreckage zones, with few intact areas in between them.

OUTER HULL (12)

The outer hull is mostly intact in this area. Structural members and armour layers are interspersed with inspection and maintenance crawlways, most of which are blocked by distortion of the ship's main structural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members. The hull is thinner between the flight operations area and the interior of the ship but the outer armour of the flight operations section creates a layer of defences which is arguably more resilient than the main hull. A Tigress could have its flight section shot clean away and survive.

DIPLOMATIC EMBARRASSMENT

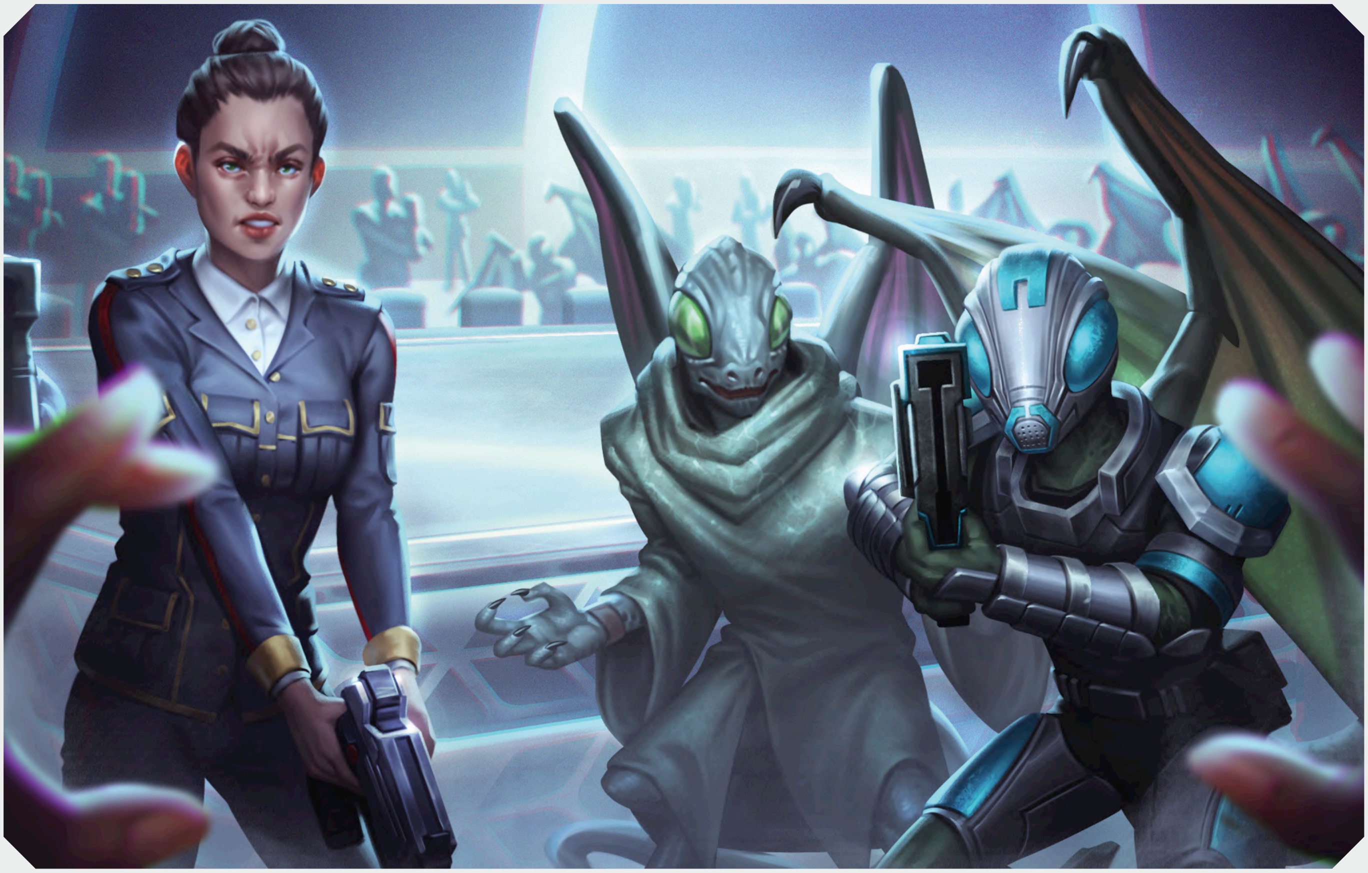
When the Travellers enter the diplomatic chamber they are confronted by a group of Imperial Navy personnel and a Droyne group. Depending on their mode of entry a violent misunderstanding might ensue but hopefully the Travellers are wise enough to avoid a fight. Something as simple as shouting 'friendlies!' and not levelling guns at the chamber's occupants will buy enough time to begin a dialogue.

The Travellers will be telepathically scanned by the Droyne as soon as they enter the chamber. The psionic shield prevents any contact until the door is open. The fact that a band of humans (or whatever non-Droyne species the Travellers are) with psionic shields have arrived is not reassuring to the Droyne, who are used to being able to scan for potential hostility. The Imperials are naturally wary of armed people who are not Imperial Navy personnel aboard a warship that has just been swatted by an unknown force. The initial contact is likely to be tense, with the Imperial Navy group barking questions and orders to drop weapons and the Droyne alternating between telepathic contact and an attempt at gracious diplomacy by the group's Sport. This requires he come out from behind the shield of low-caste Droyne but such risks are part of the Sport's role.

Unless things go very badly the Travellers should be able to exchange information with the chamber's occupants and gain a picture of what has happened. This will be a two-way street; both parties also need information in order to decide how best to act. Neither will simply blab all their secrets – unless of course the Travellers have a way to compel them.

Both humans and Droyne want the same basic information, although for differing reasons:

- Are you hostile?
- Are you linked to the attack?
- If not, then why are you here?
- How bad is the situation beyond the bulkhead?
- Who were the attackers?
- Can you help us get home to Andor/back into the fight?



Both groups practice routine secrecy and are reluctant to divulge anything at all but the situation is so extreme that expanding upon something the Travellers could figure out for themselves is deemed acceptable. The Travellers will thus be able to get the following information in return for what both parties want.

This ship is one of a handful set up to conduct diplomacy with the Droyne. It is near-permanently assigned to Andor, withdrawing only for refits, and receives crewmembers in a constant rotation. These are drawn from a pool of extremely loyal and dedicated personnel who have been sworn to secrecy. Other diplomatic ships are mostly cruisers and tend to visit various Oytripin rather than being stationed over one. The ship does not belong to Omicron Division for the perfectly good reason that Omicron Division does not exist.

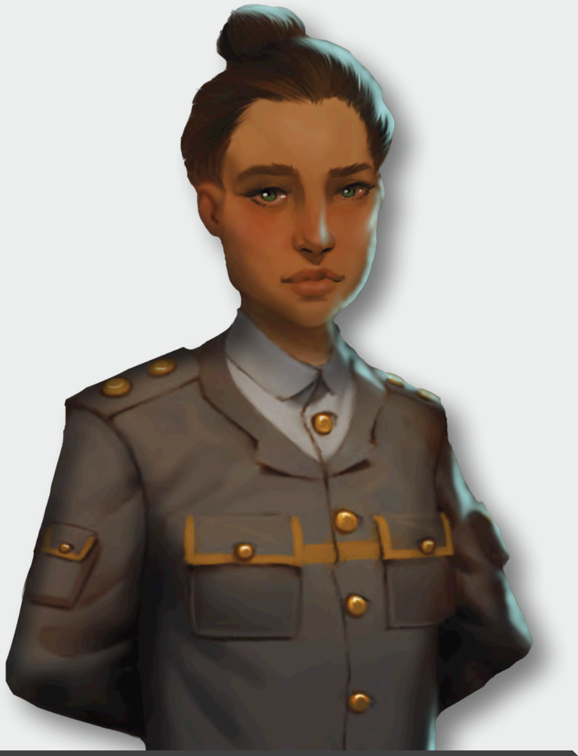
Diplomatic parties are routinely hosted aboard *INS Kinshanu*. The Droyne Leader Voayix is one of the emissaries from Andor who visit the dreadnought on an irregular but not infrequent basis. This meeting was nothing out of the ordinary; the first the Imperials knew about it was Voayix' ship approaching the docking area but that is nothing new. The duty diplomatic party, led by Lieutenant-Commander Hatice Mensah, was scrambled to provide a suitable welcome.

The meeting was entirely normal; an exchange of long-winded praise for one another's society followed by seemingly random questions from the Droyne emissary. This is common; the Droyne will ask about all manner of topics from how well crops are doing on an oddly specific part of a distant world to whether the Emperor considers he will need to invade a foreign power this month, and which one. In return they provide zero useful information whilst saying quite a lot of words and then they suddenly leave in the middle of a discussion.

On this occasion, however, the ship came under attack during the meeting. Neither side really suspects the other of treachery, although the possibility exists. Nor does either side have any useful information about the attackers or the course of the battle. They will all be shocked when they see the extent of the destruction but for now the Imperials are obeying standing orders to secure the diplomatic chamber and protect the guests, and the Droyne are letting them try.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HATICE MENSAH, IMPERIAL NAVY

Mensah is a career 'navy diplomat', who went to staff college straight out of naval academy and expected to spend her career as a flag-lieutenant to various admirals. Instead she was offered a different career path open only to a trusted few. After receiving extensive training in Droyne culture she was assigned as an emissary and diplomatic attaché to the few Oytripin open to such close contact. Not coincidentally she never learned the sort of deep secrets an admiral's aide might encounter and cannot reveal much even if telepathically scanned. Essentially she has one job – diplomatic contact with Droyne on behalf of the Imperial Navy and the Emperor.



LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HATICE MENSAH, IMPERIAL NAVY

SPECIES	**GENDER**	**AGE**
—	Female	—

TRAITS	—

STR	5	**INT**	11	**SKILLS**
DEX	7	**EDU**	12	Athletics (endurance) 1, Diplomat 3, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Leadership 2, Vacc Suit 1
END	8	**SOC**	9	

WEAPONS	Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2)

This career path came with benefits and drawbacks. As a hyper-specialised staff officer Mensah would be little use elsewhere without extensive additional training but on the other hand she knows she is special and has received rapid promotion to suit her role. This was a balance she accepted willingly and quite humbly; it is where she was chosen to serve and she will do so to the best of her ability. Mensah is proud of her rank and station but not arrogant about it – traits that may have influenced her selection as emissary.

Lieutenant-Commander Mensah has even been permitted to go planetside on Andor and visit the graceful cities of the Droyne. She knows perfectly well this was all part of the diplomatic game; the Droyne showed her what they wanted her to see and the Imperial Navy sent her because she is truly loyal and proud to serve. Telepathic scanning would show no hostile intent towards Andor and Mensah would be a shining example of the best the Imperium has.

Mensah is not a 'fighting navy' officer and has little idea what to do in a shipboard crisis. However, she knows her duty and will carry it out to the best of her ability. Once it becomes apparent the ship is lost she will devote her efforts to getting a warning to the rest of the fleet and protecting the Droyne diplomatic party. The latter is partly a matter of following standing orders not to let foreign diplomats get killed aboard an Imperial vessel but Mensah genuinely feels this is the right thing to do.

Her agenda is straightforward and obvious. Mensah intends to find a functional ship and send her two petty officers – or anyone else she can find – to warn the Imperial fleet. This is an absolute priority but so long as she can find someone she trusts to carry the warning she will prefer to accompany the Droyne party to Andor and deal with any diplomatic fallout. This may also be an opportunity to improve diplomatic relations if there is a common enemy… Mensah does not know what will happen on Andor but sees it as her duty to represent the Imperium to the Oytrip and gain whatever advantages – or mitigate whatever damage – she can.

Mensah may decide that accompanying the Travellers is an important mission, in which case she will try to do so. That might take the form of an offer to help or simply tagging along, or she may try to exert authority she really does not have. Mensah is a diplomat first and foremost, and will take a soft approach if at all possible. She wants to know more about the Travellers, which is hardly surprising considering the circumstances of their first encounter.

VOYAIX' WARRIORS

The warriors are armed with TL9 laser weapons. Other than being psionically triggered they are little different to those in use elsewhere.

VOYAIX' WARRIORS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE	
Droyne	—	—	
TRAITS	—		
STR 10	**INT** 4	**SKILLS**	
DEX 9	**EDU** 3	—	
END 11	**PSI** 9		
WEAPONS	Laser Carbine (4D, Zero-G)		
ARMOUR	Fighting-Armour (+15)		

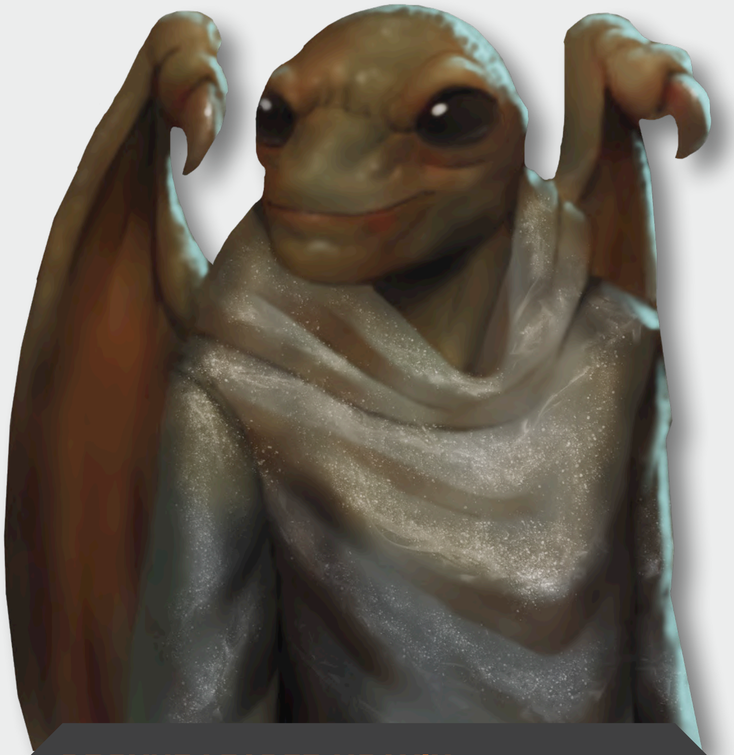
DROYNE LEADER VOAYIX

Voyaix is a Droyne Leader; mysterious and strange. He is a regular visitor to *INS Kinshanu*, where he engages in pointless diplomatic dialogue. His Oytrip does not want anything from the Imperials and offers them nothing… yet they want frequent 'sit-downs' in which the same meaningless words are repeated over and over again. This suits the purposes of the Oytrip, although Voyaix does not know why. It is not his place to know, therefore he does not ask. He does as the Oytrip's senior Leaders command. Apparently the Imperials are reassured by frequent contact, although their endlessly repeated requests for a planetside embassy are always ignored.

The rest of the diplomatic party are extensions of Voyaix' will. They do as he commands them and will sacrifice themselves upon command. Voyaix will not do this needlessly as personnel are an asset to their Oytrip and should be looked after properly. It is unlikely Voyaix will sacrifice his followers for anyone else, unless he decides they are important to his Oytrip.

The Travellers will get little information about Andor from him and what they do get will be very general. Voyaix does not know about the genetic cache on Andor and whilst he is aware that some Ancients artefacts are available for the defence of the Oytrip he has no idea of their scale. He will consent to the Travellers landing on Andor once the destruction becomes apparent but makes no judgement about what they might be able to do to help. All he knows is that something terrible happened, then these very unusual individuals turned up. The Oytrip will want to know more, so Voyaix will do his best to bring the Travellers to whichever senior Leaders have survived.

If there is fighting, Voyaix will direct his warriors to deal with any assailants if necessary but will be quite happy to hold them back to protect himself if others seem able to handle the situation. The rest of his entourage can contribute little to a fight but might be useful as living shields for the Warriors.



DROYNE LEADER VOAYIX

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	Male	—

TRAITS		—		
STR	3	**INT**	10	**SKILLS**
DEX	7	**EDU**	10	Diplomat 1, Leadership 4, Telepathy 4
END	6	**PSI**	13	

ESCAPE FROM INS KINSHANU

Getting back out of the ship should not be all that complex. The Travellers will need to obtain suits for the Droyne and Imperial Navy personnel but since these are stored in a chamber on their route there is seemingly no problem. If the Travellers have reported an open path and the presence of useable craft, it would seem to be a simple matter to depart. Ideally, Lieutenant-Commander Mensah would prefer to send her two petty-officers – along with any survivors she can find – to locate a jump-capable ship whilst she goes with Voyaix to Andor. This may or may not prove possible.

Making preparations proves to be no real issue. Suits are donned but no survivors are found. It is not until the Travellers enter the docking area that things go sideways. Since the Travellers entered the recovery deck, a force of intruders has moved around the hull to investigate and eliminate them. If the Travellers' ship is outside, it has not yet been entered but its proximity alerts will start to go off at the same time battle is joined in the craft handling area. The intruders have sent for a technical team who will try to make entry to the ship. This adds urgency to the situation but might actually be a good thing – whilst they are attempting to get into the ship the enemy are not blasting it with heavy weapons.

The intruder party is scattered all over the craft handling area when the Travellers enter. It consists of groups of two to four G482-derived boarders, which the Travellers have faced before, each accompanied and controlled by a Droyne Warrior. These possess technology vastly in advance of anything Voyaix and his people have available. The Travellers may recognise their equipment as being the same as the Warriors they faced at Twilight's Peak. There is, in addition, a Leader accompanied by two Warrior bodyguards. These have no other purpose in their existence than to protect their Leader and will take every possible measure to keep attackers and weapons fire away from him.

The intruder party will immediately make a physical attack, whilst their Leader engages in a form of telepathic assault and interrogation. The Travellers may still be disorientated by the effects of the psychic art they saw in the diplomatic chamber, adding to their problems. The exact number of intruders should be matched to the capabilities of the Travellers. If they are doing too well, more intruders may enter the recovery deck or emerge from an attempt to get through the wreckage into other parts of the ship.

The fight need not be played out in complete detail unless the Travellers are really into skirmish wargames. Instead, it should be presented as a series of confused images and snapshots of the situation. Voyaix and his entourage will try to advance to their ship and enter it. The Imperials will probably move with them and may be permitted aboard. However, this might not be possible. If the entourage are driven back or scattered they will instead have to fight for survival. The physical battle will thus take the form of intruder Droyne warriors blasting at the Travellers and their allies with fusion rifles, vaporising anyone they hit who does not have powerful protection. Meanwhile the boarders charge from all sides, some of them springing onto the Droyne ship and leaping off at their enemies, or sneaking along the overhead hoists to drop on someone.

None of the Travellers' allies have plot immunity. They will be overwhelmed and quickly slain unless the Travellers prevent it. That might be a result of firepower and a good plan or the application of more exotic talents. It may be that the Travellers are sufficiently powerful psionics that they can scatter the opposition without much of a fight. If so, the Referee should let them enjoy their moment of triumph.

Details of the boarders are found on page 55. The Droyne are equipped similarly to those the Travellers encountered at Twilight's Peak, suggesting that they serve the same master. This impression is correct. None of the Warriors has been favoured with a personal audience with the Ancient Tsyamoykyo but are completely loyal to their Leader, who has been conditioned to total devotion. He will gladly die to carry out a part of his master's plan and cannot conceive of betraying Tsyamoykyo by surrendering or even negotiating with his enemies. This might actually be a disservice, as Tsyamoykyo might benefit from a warning about the Travellers, the inevitable result of Tsyamoykyo's rule-by-dominance approach. His supporters are fanatical to the point where carrying out their orders is more important than acting in their master's best interests.

If at all possible the Droyne leader will attack psionically instead of physically, using the 'psionic nightmare' style of combat the Travellers encountered aboard the wrecked ship. The difference is that this time the Droyne leader is a sentient and malicious mind. He will conjure a nightmare scenario for one of the Travellers and engage in combat as described on page 34.

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONRY

All of the Droyne wear a variant of modern Droyne fighting-armour which incorporates a psionic shield booster and a set of personal shields, as described on pages 31 and 32.

The Droyne Leader and his bodyguards are armed with fusion carbines designed to be fired one-handed. The Leader prefers to use psionic combat but will shoot in self-defence. These weapons can be set to deliver a rather modest 3D damage (4D for rifles) but are more commonly used on full power, in which case they do 12D damage (16D for rifles). This will incinerate anyone without a shield or similar protection, resulting in an explosion of flash-heated tissue fluids which does 3D damage to anyone within two metres. The effect is also rather demoralising.

In addition, the bodyguards use a variant of the eclipse shield common among modern Droyne. It is crescent shaped, enabling easy use of a one-handed firearm or energy weapon and is intended for use as cover against ranged weapons rather than in hand-to-hand combat. The user and anyone they are protecting is treated as being in cover. These shields are more powerful than modern Droyne versions and can absorb or dissipate incoming energy attacks. 6D of damage can be negated in this way, all at once or spread over a series of attacks, after which the shield's energy is dissipated and it must be recharged. This damage reduction is applied against all energy attacks passing close to the user, whether they hit or not and applied before personal shields or armour.

INTRUDER DROYNE LEADER

SPECIES		**GENDER**		**AGE**
Droyne		—		—
TRAITS			—	
STR	4	**INT**	10	**SKILLS**
DEX	8	**EDU**	9	Gun Combat (energy) 1, Telepathy 4
END	6	**PSI**	13	
WEAPONS			Fusion Pistol (3D or 12D)	
ARMOUR			Fighting-Armour (+15) with built-in shields, Psi Shield Helmet	

INTRUDER DROYNE BODYGUARDS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	—	—

TRAITS	—

STR	9	**INT**	4	**SKILLS**
DEX	8	**EDU**	3	Gun Combat (energy) 3
END	11	**PSI**	10	

WEAPONS	Fusion Pistol (3D or 12D)
ARMOUR	Eclipse Shield, Fighting-Armour (+15) with built-in shields, Psi Shield Helmet

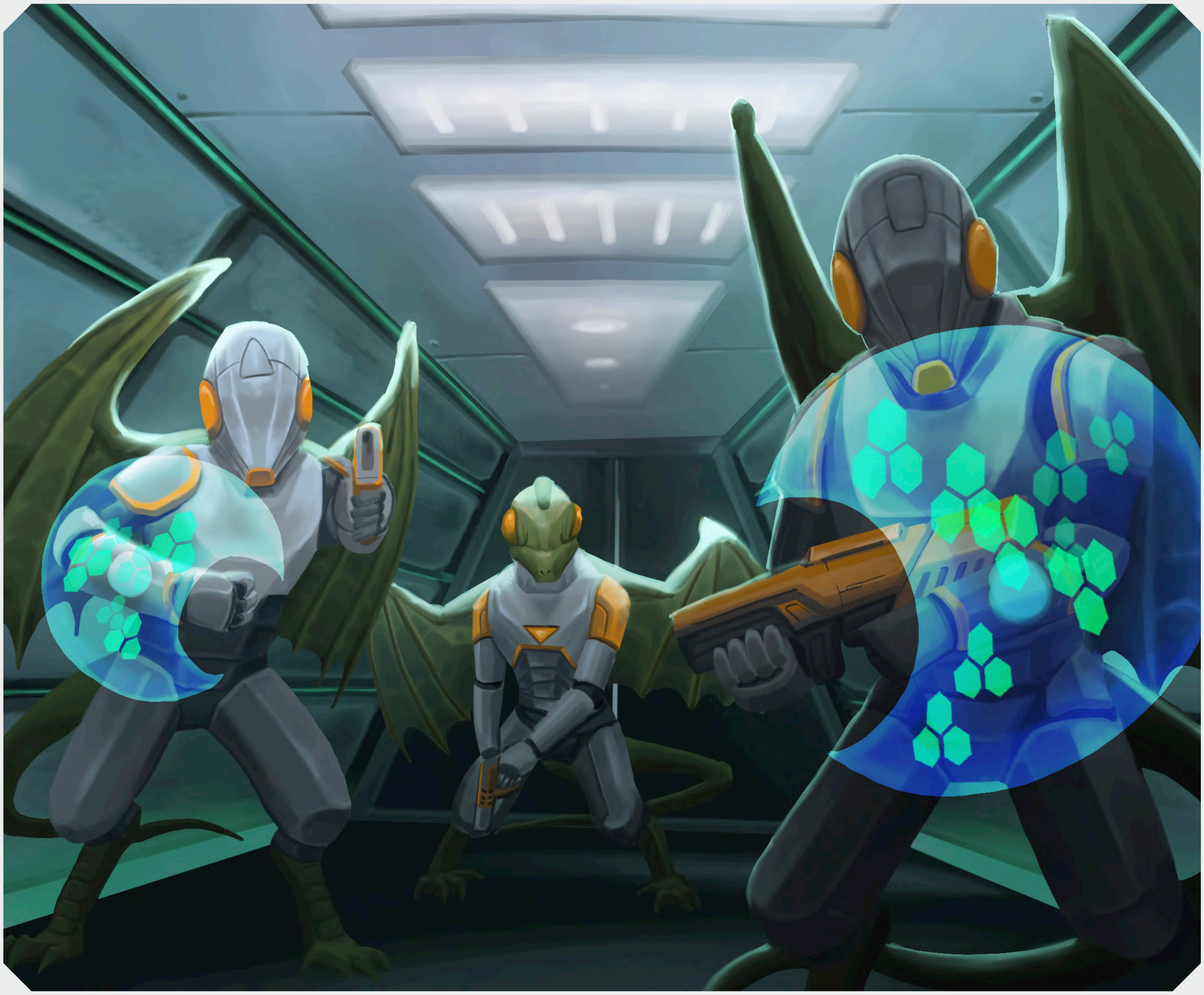
INTRUDER DROYNE WARRIORS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	—	—

TRAITS	—

STR	11	**INT**	4	**SKILLS**
DEX	7	**EDU**	3	Gun Combat (energy) 2
END	10	**PSI**	10	

WEAPONS	Fusion Rifle (4D or 16D)
ARMOUR	Eclipse Shield, Fighting-Armour (+15) with built-in shields, Psi Shield Helmet



ANDOR IS BURNING

Even from orbit, it is apparent that something terrible has happened on Andor. One entire continent is consumed by huge lava flows, sending great clouds of ash into the atmosphere. Some cities are just… gone… either replaced by smoking craters or a strangely flat area of bedrock. Some were targeted with antimatter bombs. In other cases the disintegrator shields failed and the whole city was annihilated down to its deepest foundations. Others still stand, twisted spires defiant despite the damage. There is no sign of the attackers but fighting is ongoing on the ground in some cities and rural areas.

The Travellers will note something curious; there are no distress calls of any sort. No psionic or radio-frequency calls for aid. Andor has taken its beating in stoic silence. The Travellers' ship will be challenged, both by conventional means and telepathically. The Travellers will detect strange energy readings from the surviving cities, inconsistent with any technology the Imperials or known Droyne Oytripin are thought to possess. The Travellers may be able to figure out they are being targeted with antimatter missiles and exotic particle beams are being readied. The TL9 Droyne of Andor would not have access to such weapons, which are more properly associated with the Ancients.

If the Travellers can make a case for being allowed to land they will be granted permission. The Droyne of Andor are curious about them and hope they have information about their attackers – although they will not say so. The Travellers will be directed to land at the city of Eptuay. It does not have a starport in the usual sense but there is a large open area which will suffice. It is conceivable that the Travellers will make such a hash of asking for landing permission that they have to fight what is left of the defences of Andor. If so, they will find the city defended if they try to go there. Droyne planetside troops will oppose them and attempts will be made to seize their ship. No secrets will be revealed but the Travellers might still be able to learn a little about what happened here.

As the Travellers make their landing approach it is apparent that there is fighting on the ground around Eptuay. The same is true of other cities they may decide to visit. The attackers have been cleared away from the landing area but are rampaging – apparently at random – through the city. Their goal seems to be mass casualties and general destruction rather than control. This impression is correct, as the Travellers might manage to discover. Tsyamoykyo had intended to capture Andor and use it as a base or source of immature Droyne for conversion into biological robots. The unexpectedly intense resistance caused a change of plan.

Tsyamoykyo got what he came for and has withdrawn but he chose to leave large numbers of ground troops behind. This decision makes no military sense but is typical of Tsyamoykyo. He knows his forces will be ground down, representing a huge waste of capability, but he simply does not care. He can create more troops and these will cause great destruction and loss of life before being eliminated. Punishing the Droyne of Andor for their temerity in putting up effective resistance is more important than a few tens of thousands of replaceable foot soldiers.

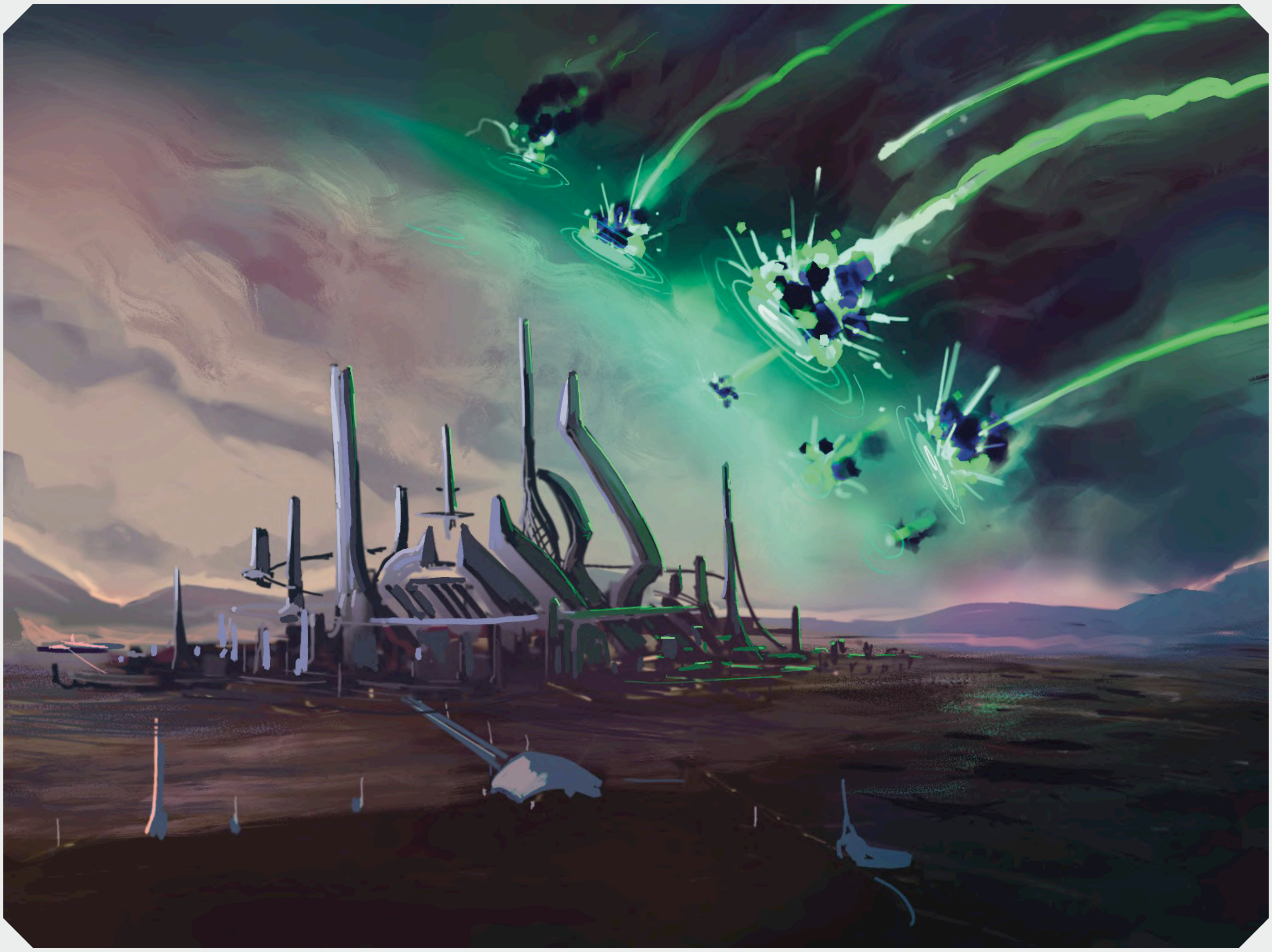
GREETINGS AMID THE WRECKAGE

If the Travellers have chosen an aggressive approach or been sufficiently non-cooperative that the Droyne of Andor assume them to be hostile, they will be met with relentless fortitude on the ground. Concepts like a hopeless situation are meaningless to Droyne Warriors; so long as a Leader thinks it is worth fighting his Warriors will do so. They are unlikely to find out about the secret chambers unless for some reason they decide to plunge deep into the city and overcome all resistance. However, given the circumstances the Droyne will accept a cessation of hostilities and put aside any losses they have suffered at the hands of the Travellers. Their surviving Leaders consider this to be in the best interests of the Oytrip.

Assuming diplomatic contact takes place, the Travellers will be presented to a Leader of Leaders named Myuemos. He is, naturally, accompanied by other Leaders and their entourage, and has his own guards, drones and other facilitators of his greatness. He rides a disc-shaped grav-platform which moves at a steady walking pace and is surrounded by hundreds of deferential Droyne. Travellers who have sensor devices handy can tell that the platform has some very exotic shielding which is way above the level of the supposedly TL9 Oytrip. The tech is not the same as what they have found to date but similar. The difference is not function so much as elegance of implementation. It must have been provided by a different Ancient; perhaps Yaskoydray himself.

Myuemos' regalia and entourage suggest – correctly – that he is extremely important. Not the planetary ruler, of course, since the Oytrip does not work that way, but the custodian of its most important city. That importance was not apparent before today; Eptuay was just a typical small city. However, where others were flattened in the initial onslaught or pounded into wreckage, Eptuay stood firm. Tsyamoykyo naturally increased the ferocity of his attacks but could not break the city's defences. There are craters outside the city's shields which still fizzle with low-grade antimatter reactions, yet not one missile struck the city. The ground assault got in and is being fiercely resisted by Droyne with advanced weapons and, perhaps more importantly, tremendously powerful psionic abilities.

Myuemos sends a party of Sports forward to give greetings, which might go on for a while. They speak of the greatness and wisdom of their master and refer to brilliant decisions he made in the past. They are, naturally, polite about the Travellers but say they regret being unable to greet them properly as they are unaware of the Travellers' deeds. This is the Travellers' chance to introduce themselves. It might seem like an intelligence gathering gambit on the part of the Droyne – as indeed it is – but this exchange of greetings is a way of establishing who each party is dealing with.



There is an etiquette to these exchanges. Droyne do not lie about their achievements and do not ‘pad their resume’ by making vague statements that could be taken to suggest they have done something amazing. Likewise, they do not downplay their achievements. Every statement is true and accurate, and to do otherwise is a sure sign that an outsider cannot be trusted. The Droyne of Eptuay hope to be impressed by the Travellers and to find them honourable but will accept the situation as it is and make the best decisions they can.

The Droyne of Andor do not have a lot of interactions with other species and are not adept at detecting lies without telepathy. Since all the Travellers have mental shields by this point the Droyne must simply take what the Travellers say at face value unless they are accompanied by an unshielded person who doubts their claims. This could be awkward, since assertions that seem plausible to the Droyne – such as contact with Ancients – may be extremely outlandish to a typical Imperial human.

Once greetings are completed, which can take a while even with fighting going on in the city behind the delegation, the Travellers can enter into a dialogue with Myuemoss. This absolutely has to take place in suitable surroundings, so the whole entourage heads back towards the city. Travellers will be provided with grav platforms if they need them. These are not as advanced or well protected as the one used by Myuemoss but are well made and operate smoothly. The whole entourage flies sedately towards the city and enters a port in the side of one of its towers. Below, ground combat rages between the forces of Tsyamoykyo and the city’s Warriors.

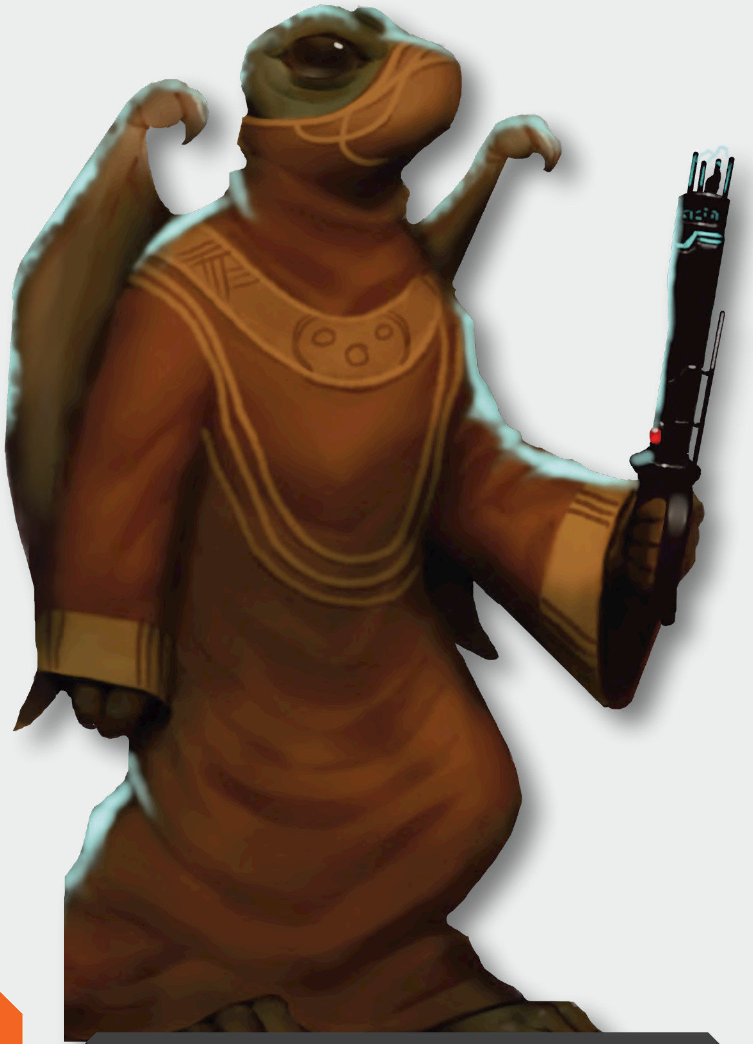
The Travellers may note an oddity of Droyne warfare; only Warriors fight. Leaders and Sports will defend themselves but only the specialists attack or make tactical movements. Technicians and Workers ensure there is an adequate supply of ammunition or energy cells, or hold heavy mobile barricades for use as shields, but they rely entirely on the Warriors for protection. When it works, this is very effective; Workers will advance a barricade despite enemies just metres away, whilst Warriors dash or fly to where they know it will be when they arrive. When the cooperation is broken, either by the loss of a Leader or all members of one caste in a force, collapse is swift. Survivors will rally on another Leader and become instantly effective once more. In short, there is nothing like the usual human concept of morale at play here. The attackers, for their part, seem to all be Warrior/Leaders and can command other creatures in the same force or make tactical decisions on their own.

Once the entourage has entered the tower, the Travellers are conveyed through series of chambers to a grav lift and down into the sub-levels. The technology on display is no great surprise; TL9 items built in a characteristically Droyne manner. There is no concession whatsoever to other species; everything is shaped and sized for Droyne. The Travellers are not offered refreshments or any form of hospitality but this is hardly surprising given there is a war being fought outside. Requests for information are ignored in typical Droyne fashion. Upon reaching a deep sub-level the Travellers are ushered into a huge domed chamber. Light seemingly comes from everywhere and nowhere, creating strange shadow effects that blend with the patterns of light and shade in the walls and ceiling. This is the Chamber of Hidden Knowledge. It might be termed the grand archive of the people of Andor but it is far more than that.

The chamber floor is flat, relieved by depressions and raised areas. An annular depression runs around the floor, separating a wide outer area from the inner zone. As the Travellers approach, a bridge of white light appears to convey them across. The other Leaders of Leaders also cross, making their way to raised or lower areas with their entourage in tow. Myuemoss gestures at the walls, drawing the Travellers’ eyes to the patterns there and then stands perfectly still whilst he waits for the results.

MYUEMOSS, LEADER OF LEADERS

Myuemoss is the greatest of the Leaders of Leaders who are the highest echelon of Andor’s society. He reached his position by the usual path, making good decisions at each stage and proving himself wiser than his peers. There is no other way to reach this position and he has proven worthy of it again and again. His people look to him for guidance in this terrible time and judge him on how he reacts to circumstances without criticising him for not seeing them coming. If he fails to find a way through the present crisis, Myuemoss may be eclipsed or even choose to step down and meditate himself to death. This holds no fear for him; his only concern is the welfare of his people.



MYUEMOSS, LEADER OF LEADERS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE		
Droyne	Male	—		
TRAITS	—			

STR	2	INT	11	SKILLS
DEX	5	EDU	13	Ancients Tech 4, Awareness 3, Caste (Leader) 6, Clairvoyance 2, Leadership 6, Tactics (military) 6, Telepathy 4
END	3	PSI	12	

WEAPONS	Leader-rod (3D, Zero-G)
ARMOUR	Regalia (+2), Leader-rod (+12)

Myuemoss is old and wise, and closely tied into the mindset of his forebears by the psionic dreams triggered by artworks in the cities. He knows the entire history of Andor as if he had been there and is one of the few Leaders of Leaders who can withstand the terrors of the darkest might-have-beens. In his visions he has explored all manner of futures and is deeply disturbed that he did not see this one coming.

As a Leader, Myuemoss is as inscrutable as it is possible to be. Nothing is given away – to non-Droyne eyes anyway – by his body language or tone of speech. He rarely speaks at all, preferring to communicate his intentions and desired actions to one of his Sports, who will then convey them to the recipient. He may well continue to do this even in the middle of a gunfight as is his nature.

Myuemoss is no kindly old alien; he is the de facto ruler of a planet which holds secrets others would – and have – kill for. The welfare of his people matters more than anything else. As such, he is more than a little frightened by what he is considering doing. He recognises the Travellers are something new, which is in and of itself a cause for alarm. Droyne do not like new variables and the Travellers are most certainly that. At the same time, the status quo is very unpleasant and Myuemoss thinks the Travellers might be part of the solution. He is thus willing to entertain the possibility of allying and perhaps even trusting them.

Interacting with Myuemoss could be tricky for the Travellers, since they are unlikely to have any idea how their words and deeds are received. He will respect and be reassured by deeds in favour of the Oytrip and by Travellers who are respectful of Droyne culture. Flippant or deceitful Travellers will earn his mistrust – and he considers downplaying someone’s importance as bad as overstating it. Travellers who are blandly honest will win his approval most readily.

Myuemoss has the resources of a whole planet – what is left of it, anyway – at his disposal. He can obtain more or less any equipment available on Andor at a few minutes’ notice. This includes a number of Ancients artefacts and even a vessel augmented with their technology. He might decide to loan or even give the Travellers something they need if they can make a case for it but the idea of selling anything to them is simply inconceivable.

IN THE CHAMBER OF HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

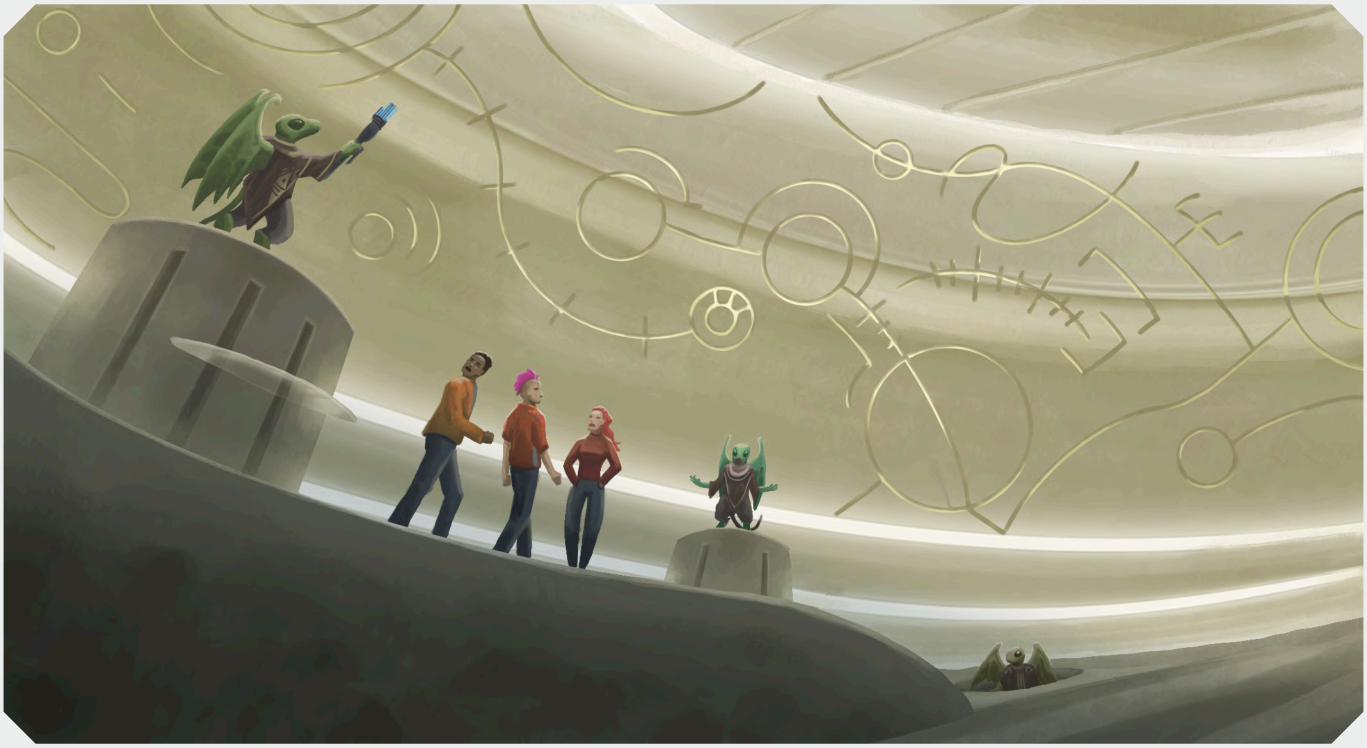
The Travellers have no way of knowing this but if they reacted as typical humans to the patterns they would have been gunned down by the Warrior guards. Ironically, being unable to interpret the patterns would be grounds for execution. This might seem odd, since the only offence committed would be disappointing the Droyne but such is the nature of Droyne society. Since the Travellers are sensitive to the psionic triggers within the patterns the decision to show them is risky but correct. The Travellers are triggered and catapulted into another psionic dream.

THE CHAMBER

Within the chamber are five distinct areas, with open floor between them. It is possible to view the psionic trigger patterns from any point in the chamber, although they will only make sense or convey information to those within the annular depression. Anyone not permitted to view the meanings of the patterns can traverse the sides, seeing only some pleasing art which makes them feel generally dutiful and good about their place in the Oytrip.

The psionic trigger effect works anywhere within the annular depression and for most observers happens almost immediately after they cross it. Observers might wander away from the entry point, lost in their visions, but they will not enter any of the special areas. They will thus see the generic form of the visions, as a history of the Oytrip and their world, with limited understanding of the deeper issues. Stronger minds can move to one of the special areas before they are triggered, experiencing a different aspect or subtler nuances of the visions and gaining deeper insights. Not everyone can reach all of the special areas before being triggered, with only the greatest of Leaders having access to the full plethora of information and might-have-beens available in the psionic construct.

This is not so for the Travellers. Due to their unique mental state they are able to see everything from anywhere in the chamber, a fact that may both intrigue and frighten them. The Travellers will be close to the entrance point when they are triggered, just after crossing the annular depression. They may stay still or wander, and could be anywhere bounded by the depression when the vision ends. The Referee should ask the Travellers where in the chamber each of them



is when the vision ends without yet explaining the situation. Their finishing point may be in one of the special areas, which will certainly get the attention of the Droyne Leaders. Normally someone triggered at ground level remains there and this is taken as a sign of a weak mind. Whilst even great Leaders sometimes choose to view the patterns from the ground, no-one has ever moved from one special area to another during the visions, nor have they entered a special area after being triggered at ground level. This indicates to the Droyne that there is something very special about the Travellers… although this will have to await investigation after the immediate crisis is resolved.

ENTRY POINTS (1)

Two entry points lie opposite one another across the circular chamber. They are not covered by doors or valves but are strangely difficult to see from a distance as they blend into the patterns covering the walls of the chamber.

CURIOUS DEPRESSION (2)

An annular depression runs right around the chamber some 10 metres in from the walls, 61.483 centimetres deep at the bottom of its smooth curve. It is possible to walk around the chamber outside the depression but the patterns on the walls cannot be made out well enough to tell their story. Walking around is a way of crossing the chamber without experiencing the history-dream, which is something of a mystical experience for the Droyne. Only those favoured to be invited into the central areas get to experience their history. This is only a select few, for whom a bridge of white light appears to allow them to cross the depression. It would be easy enough to just scramble through but no Droyne would ever do that.

INVERSE DIAS (3)

An ovoid area of the floor is slightly recessed. It is just over 60 centimetres down, the same as the annular depression, curving gently down to the centre. This has the effect of making it uncomfortable to stand anywhere but the bottom of the curve, although it is possible to walk along the bottom. The Oynprith name for this feature is Place of Guided Observance. Walking along the base and observing at different points may alter perception of the patterns a little. This area is associated with what might be termed the social history of Andor and her people.

RAISED DIAS (4)

An ovoid area of the floor rises gently to a curved top about 60 centimetres above the rest. There is no flat point but although the ground looks potentially slippery there is more than sufficient grip to stand anywhere. It is not comfortable to do so however, which typically cases viewers to move around. Doing so may alter perception of the patterns and permit a deeper understanding or new truths to be revealed. The Oynprith name for this feature is Place of Free Observance. It is associated with the 'big picture' – great decisions by Leaders, interactions with Yaskoydray and other powerful beings and major rituals.

STEEP DEPRESSION (5)

A circular area of the floor is lowered by just over 1.3 metres. The sides are vertical, with automated grav lifting points concealed around the lip. This area is known as the Place of Forced Observance. It is associated with the military history of Andor; the rare wars and rarer outside attacks, and hypothetical scenarios including the use of Ancient weapons.

WIDE DIAS (6)

A circular area of the floor is raised a little more than 1.3 metres. It is flat on the top and reached by means of automatic grav lifting points around the perimeter. This area is known as the Place of Chosen Observance. It is associated with details of rituals and the correct construction of psionic triggers, devices and the like.

HIGH DIAS (7)

A circular area of the floor is raised some 2.76 metres and accessed like the others. It is known as the Place of Fearful Observance. It is associated with the possible dark and frightening futures of the Oytrip, and disturbing to even the strongest minds.

OAYRK (8)

Oayrk might be considered the second greatest of the Leaders-of-Leaders. He makes his way to one end of the Raised Dias as the Travellers begin their visions. The Travellers may sense his presence in their dream-state as an earnest guardian of his people, willing to do terrible things to protect them. Where force is used in the vision, the Travellers will sense his approval.

SAMSSES (9)

Samsses is a lesser Leader-of-Leaders, rapidly elevated to greatest of his city when his predecessor was killed. He is experienced and competent but at a lower echelon of command. If the Travellers sense his presence they get the impression of someone studying the decisions of others in order to do as well or better. Where Oayry has strong opinions about what to do for the best, Samsses is more open to a range of ideas.

SEVUKOY (10)

Sevukoy has descended into the Place of Forced Observance. Like Oayrk he is interested primarily in the strength and safety of the Oytrip but does not approve of the use of force if any other solution is available. The Travellers gain the impression he is forcing himself to confront the reality of superweapons and other large-scale measures in order to prepare for the possibility they may have to be used and also to find ways to prevent it. Given what has just happened to Andor, his main concern is the defence of the world against a renewed attack.

MYUEMOSS (11)

Myuemoss is the greatest of all the Leaders-of-Leaders. Whilst not a planetary ruler as such he is the most influential in the decisions made regarding the planet as a whole. He ascends to the Place of Fearful Observances, where most Leaders cannot go. There, he concerns himself in part with the consequences of the attack but also the implications of the Travellers' arrival.

OYSYUAM (12)

Oysyuam ascends to the Place of Chosen Observance. He enters the vision-state but can be sensed watching the Travellers' reactions to their own visions rather than the history of his people. He is particularly interested in how they are able to perceive the triggered psionic dreams in a way only the most suitable Leaders and well-trained Drones can normally do. When he realises the Travellers can do something no Droyne can – moving from one area to another to perceive different aspects more clearly in the same dream instance – he is intrigued and alarmed.

UPTSYUX (13)

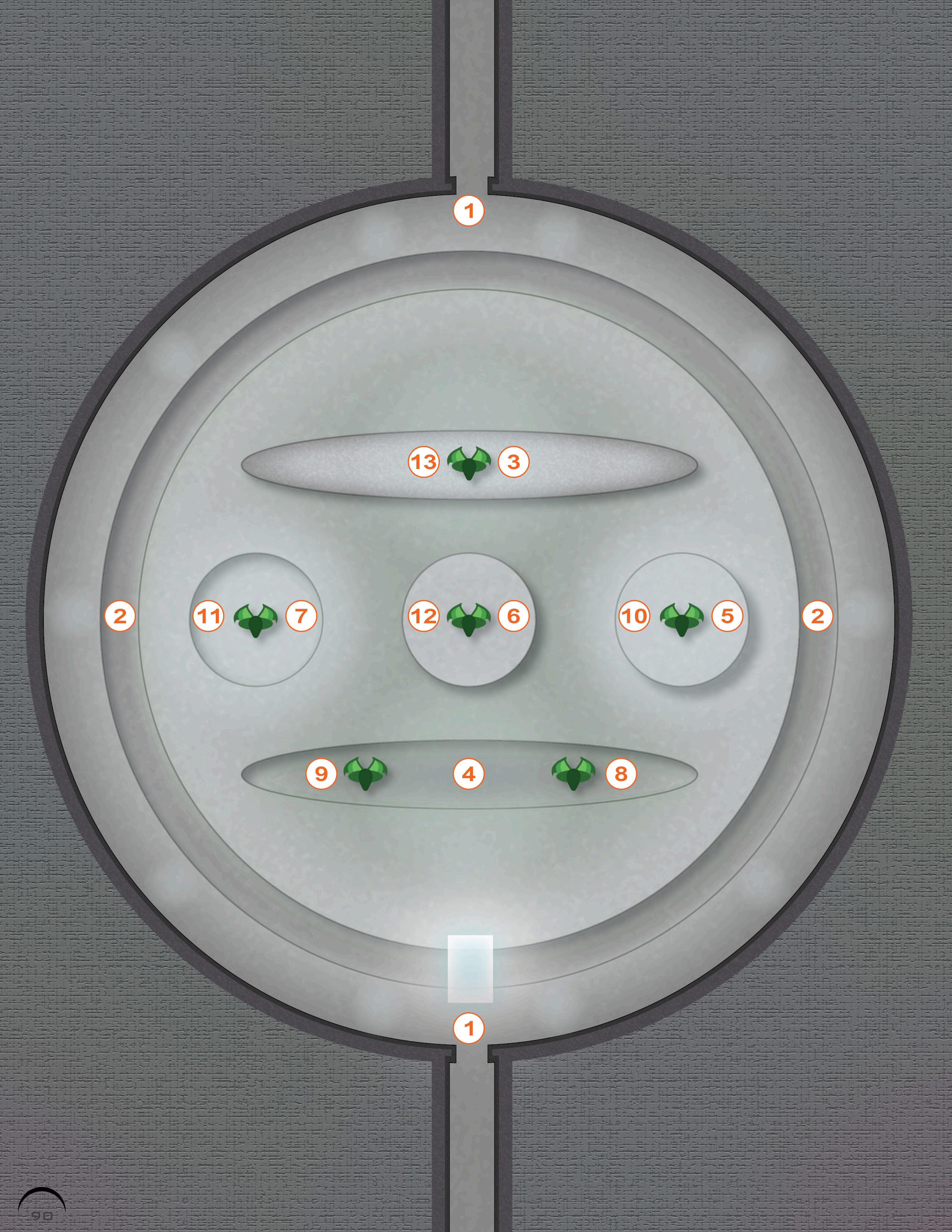
Uptsyux descends to the Place of Guided Observance. His interest at this time is seeing how the Travellers react to revelations within the dream and what the implications of the attack will be for the future of Droyne on Andor. Travellers who sense his presence in the dream-state will note a particular concern about one specific rural population.

TRAVELLERS IN THE DREAM-STATE

As noted, the Travellers may wander around the chamber whilst experiencing the visions. They have no conscious control over where they go but may follow their nature. Thus a Traveller who has always had an interest in military matters is more likely to gravitate to the Place of Forced Observance than one who is more concerned with general history or economics. Alternatively, their wanderings may be random. They may end up in one of the special areas or somewhere on the floor. Travellers will not go outside the annular depression and will not do anything silly like falling in. Their movements will be of great interest to the Droyne and where they end up will be important afterwards.

Locations in the Chamber

Area	Focus	Who is Present
Floor Level	General History	None of the Leaders. Some members of the entourage.
Inverse Dias (3)	Social History	Uptsyux
Raised Dias (4)	Leadership and Major Decisions	Oayrk, Samsses
Steep Depression (5)	Military History and Hypotheticals	Sevukoy
Wide Dias (6)	Rituals and Spiritual Matters	Oysyuam
High Dias (7)	Future Disasters	Myuemoss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THE HISTORY- DREAM OF ESKAYLOYT

The Travellers witness the entire history of Andor over what is for others just a few minutes. Time has no meaning in the dream-state; some events are seen in detail whilst millennia flash past in an instant. Some of what the Travellers see is conjecture on the part of the patterns' creators but everything is presented as fact. The Travellers might not realise this but as they become more familiar with the triggered dream-state they may be able to tell observed events from inferred ones.

The dream begins at the outer edge of a star system which is gradually coalescing into what will become Andor and the other planets. The surface cools, life appears and within instants the first proto-Droyne are making primitive spears to hunt with. They change over time, becoming recognisably Droyne and developing new technologies. Wars are rare but highly destructive when they do occur. Gradually the Droyne spread out across the surface of their world, sailing graceful ships using the winds of the dense atmosphere.

As wooden cities give way to steel and concrete, Droyne technology diverges from the usual progression. Once steam power is possible a specialist group of psionic workers emerges to support it. These possess the pyrokinesis ability, enabling them to heat ceramic bricks in an instant and make steam without the need to burn fuels. Ever greater cooperation is required as psionic specialists become essential to most aspects of society. Cities are heated and powered by pyrokinesis; communications rely on telepathy and clairvoyance.

As the Droyne of Andor begin exploring their solar system, their cities and rural groups are connected by instant communication at the highest levels, with the general populace not needing such things. There is no rampant consumerism, no voracious use of resources for the sake of making money. There is no money, for that matter. Grav-assisted construction techniques allow buildings to be graceful as well as functional. Everything seems calm, orderly and peaceful.

The Travellers are not entirely detached observers in all of this. They directly witness events as they unfold, is if they were present in the form of a sort of 'everyDroyne' persona – a nondescript individual overlooked by everyone else yet part of the story. Most of the time the Travellers have no ability to change the course of events – this is history, after all. However, as they will discover, the narrative is a little different for everyone. This raises the question of whether the psionic dream is an accurate account of what happened and the answer is that it is not. It is instead an impression of history, filtered through the experiences of the observer. The Travellers will be able to intervene now and then, changing the story as they experience it. They have not altered history by doing this but may alter the version of history related to the present generation.

THE RISE OF YASKOYDRAY

Things begin to change with the rise of Yaskoydray, or Grandfather. He is a regal and mystical but rather frightening figure in the dream. None of the Travellers can say when they became aware of him but at some point it is as if he had always been there. Society begins to change, with cities specialising in one aspect or another of Yaskoydray's works. Not all Leaders of the cities agree with this change in the nature of Andor's society. Yaskoydray is annoyed, as lack of cooperation could slow down his vital research projects and plans for the development of the Droyne.

Historically, Yaskoydray commanded the Droyne to obey and most did. Those that did not were punished with early versions of the Ancients' war machines. These were primitive by later standards but more than a match for the forces of a TL10 Droyne city. A short but incredibly violent campaign suppressed resistance and convinced the Droyne to remain docile for generations to come. However, this may not be the events the Travellers experience.

The Travellers' part in these events can be played out in a freeform narrative style, using PSI checks (with Interpret level as a DM) to determine if an action succeeds or not. If they are sufficiently strong-willed the Travellers can experience a completely different story to what happened in history, perhaps defeating Yaskoydray and preventing the Ancients from ever appearing. History, and the situation in the modern era, does not change but the Travellers can explore what might have been.

By default, each Traveller plays the role of a city Leader. Those who want to be someone else must pass a PSI check (with Interpret level as a DM). There is nothing to stop a Traveller from 'playing' as Yaskoydray himself in this scenario, or as a giant war machine, or a small burrowing mammal that happened to have made a home nearby. If more than one Traveller wants to 'be' a specific individual, the one with the highest Effect may choose to take the role or pass it to someone else. That does not have to be a willing recipient but attempts to force a role on someone requires an opposed PSI check (with Interpret level as a DM).

Once the Travellers have established who they are, they can either watch events play out as they did in history or choose to make changes and explore the might-have-beens. The Referee and Travellers are free to make up the details, although they are constrained by the technology available to TL10 Droyne and slightly more advanced prototypes created by Yaskoydray. Some of the possible outcomes are discussed here but the Travellers might explore others.

THE GREAT REBELLION

An influential Leader attempts to rally the cities of Andor against Yaskoydray. Perhaps the rebellion is stillborn, due to a failure of diplomacy among the cities. If enough cities are rallied to challenge Yaskoydray, the Great Rebellion takes place. Yaskoydray fights with war machines and the forces of loyal cities; armies of Droyne Warriors clash on the ground and in the air. Is the rebellion undermined by treachery? Do more cities desert Yaskoydray? The Travellers must decide at each point what they want to happen and make a PSI check (using their Interpret level as a DM). If they fail, the Referee should impose a negative outcome – or ask the Travellers to narrate one. The Great Rebellion can end with the overthrow and death of Yaskoydray. It did not happen in history, of course, but this is a might-have-been.

AN OUTPOURING OF LOYALTY

An influential Leader takes it upon himself to overcome the reluctance of some cities. He conducts a tour of those who are wavering, making a strong case for greatness in the shadow of Yaskoydray. Perhaps he is assassinated or eliminated by those who think the Droyne destiny lies elsewhere – this might lead to a Great Rebellion. The tour might fail, leading to a conflict which – more than likely – will be won by Yaskoydray after a great deal of bloodshed. Does the Leader succeed? If so, Yaskoydray's great works are begun sooner and Andor has a few less craters.

THE LAST STAND

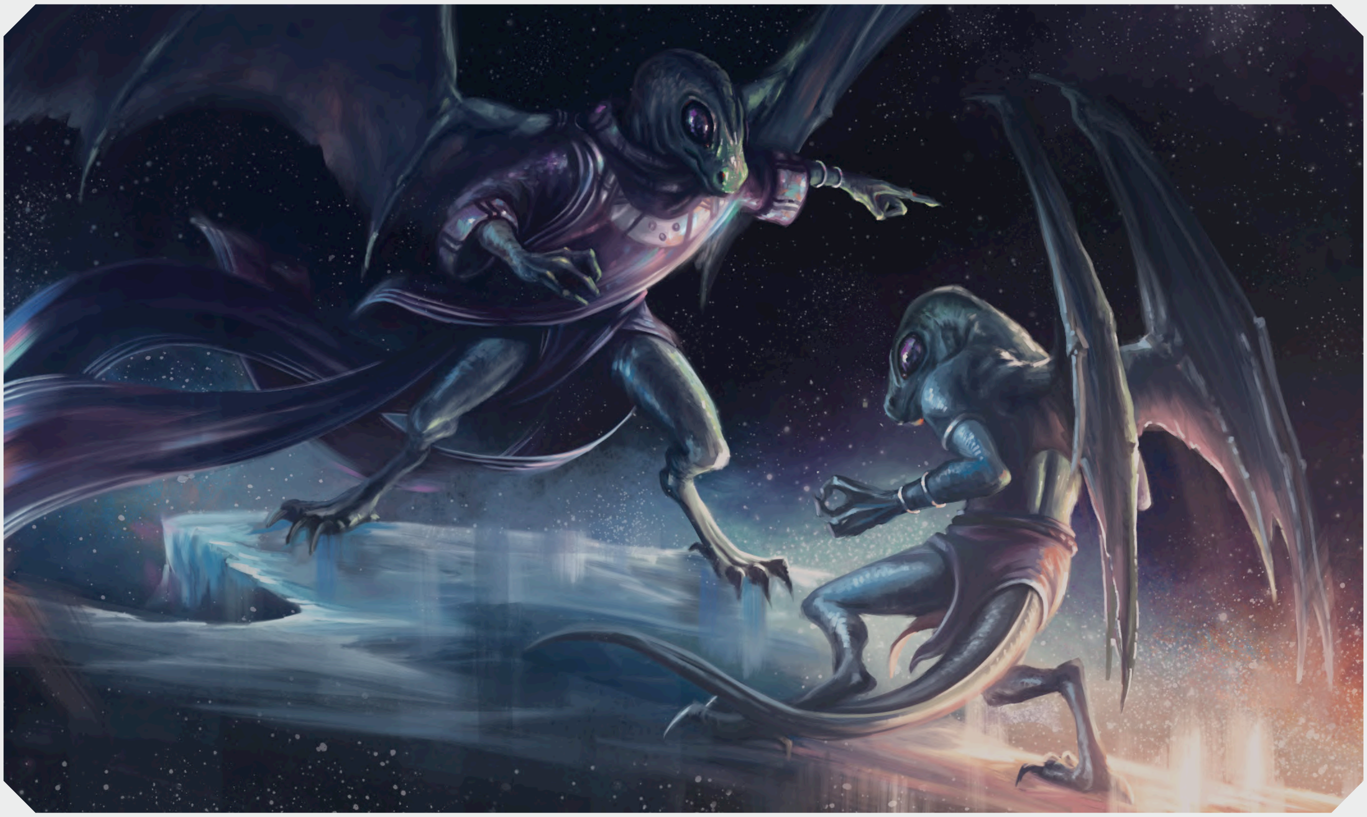
The outcome closest to the historical one sees a few cities uniting against Yaskoydray's unification effort. Their fight is hopeless and one by one they fall to his armies and war machines. Now, the last free city of Andor is under threat. Defending it are the remnants of the rebels; war machines loom on the horizon. Does the city surrender? Does Yaskoydray permit surrender, or does he make an example of the rebels? Do they fight to the last? If so, the city is wiped from the face of the planet. Do some Droyne escape to carry on the fight as best they can? The fall of the rebel cities is inevitable but the details experienced by the Travellers may be significant.

THE ANCIENTS ERA

With Andor unified – one way or another – and the Droyne firmly established as loyal servitors, Yaskoydray begins his great works. Technology advances at an incredible rate, starting with the development of the jump drive. Soon ships crewed by Droyne are plying the spaceways, bringing information and samples of everything from soil and rocks to wines made by primitive species, back to Andor. Among the worlds visited by the Ancients is an unremarkable garden world now known as Terra. Yaskoydray sees great potential in some of the species of this world.

Humans from Terra are co-opted and transplanted, along with a race uplifted from wolves. Yaskoydray chooses to settle these, the Vargr, in a region of space to coreward of his usual area of operations. He transplants humans to many worlds and instructs his servitors to direct the development of one group towards psionic powers and another to become longer-lived than others of their kind. The Terran population is left to develop on its own as the baseline to compare other groups of humans to.

Yaskoydray creates 20 clones of himself and 20 more from each of them, teaching some of his skills and knowledge to each. Most are indoctrinated with a particular mindset and way of operating, creating a group of specialists – some cautious, some bold and some downright reckless – to assist with his projects.



They are allowed to take servitors of their own but forbidden to interfere with the humans of Terra. One of the offspring defies Yaskoydray's injunction and attempts to steal a population of humans after his recklessness destroyed most of his own servitors. Grandfather's response is swift and direct; the offspring is imprisoned in a pocket universe and his captured human population are eliminated.

This is Ekyaioyx, the original rebel against Yaskoydray. At the time Grandfather still trusted his offspring and discussed with them what he should do in this unprecedented situation. The Travellers find themselves present at a strange telepathic conference in which the fate of Ekyaioyx is decided. They see subsequent events unfold… did he escape from his prison and join the fight against Grandfather? Did he escape and flee? Is he still imprisoned, or is there a dead universe somewhere with the remnants of his works? Were all the servitors slain or did some escape far beyond Charted Space in a commandeered vessel? The Travellers will decide the fate of Ekyaioyx and his level of power – if he still exists – by their actions in this part of the history-dream.

THE FINAL WAR

Yaskoydray has built a civilisation spanning all of Charted Space and beyond. His offspring are mostly working in pocket universes created to suit their requirements. Some, notably the feeble-minded Tsyamoykyo, have turned out to be a grave disappointment. Tsyamoykyo is little more than a lackey for his siblings, summoned when they need him and given menial tasks to perform. Yaskoydray despises Tsyamoykyo but finds him useful. There is little direct contact between the Ancients now, other than when Tsyamoykyo or one of the other most-minor Ancients visit a pocket universe to pass on instructions from Yaskoydray or collect results of a project.

Content with the progress being made in Charted Space, Yaskoydray voyages far afield. He visits the core of the galaxy and far distant sections of other spiral arms. He encounters strange beings and learns ever deeper secrets. Then, suddenly, he returns to Charted Space and summons all his offspring. To his disappointment and annoyance, only a handful heed the call. Yaskoydray repeats his summons. He knows of a great threat that will someday overwhelm Charted Space and he needs all the resources of the Ancients to prepare for it. Yet he is proud; perhaps too proud to explain the problem and ask for assistance.

Does Grandfather put the protection of Charted Space ahead of his ego and ask his offspring for help, or does he just repeat the demand? How many offspring rally to the call? Those who do work feverishly for decades, assembling a force of mighty war machines and deadly starships. Then they leave Charted Space. Those that survive return almost a century later, with tales of a fearsome battle and an enemy fought only to a stalemate. The greatest and best of the Ancients have fallen, whilst the disobedient majority pursue their own interests.

Yaskoydray knows he has only bought time with the lives of his favoured sons and grandsons. He must rally all the resources of the Ancients and their servitors. His emissaries are politely ignored, so he resolves to command through fear. Using Tsyamoykyo to place a means of assassination in the pocket universes of as many of his offspring as he can, he sets out to make war on the most flagrantly disobedient. Yaskoydray hopes to frighten the others into obeying him but instead they turn against their sire. The war escalates.

Yaskoydray resolves to end the conflict by whatever means are necessary and orders Tsyamoykyo to trigger his weapons. How effective were they? Did he obey the order as it was given, or did he eliminate only those he chose to? Pocket universes were collapsed but did they entirely cease to exist? If not, could some of the Ancients have survived – each in a diminished universe?

Perhaps the great threat to Charted Space perceived by Yaskoydray was the Final War itself; if so he may have had an epiphany on his voyages or receive a warning from some wise being. Perhaps the threat was external and continues to lurk in the darkness beyond the edges of the map. Either way, Yaskoydray needed to bring Charted Space fully under his control and he did not achieve that. The power of the Ancients, including his own, was broken and the war simmered down to a low-key struggle for control over relatively primitive populations.

The truth about the Ancients is that the offspring of Yaskoydray were the leading minds but they needed a powerbase of technologically advanced servitors. Many of the Ancients themselves were slain or imprisoned, decapitating that faction, but in most cases it was the erosion of the powerbase that rendered individual Ancients impotent. Those who were willing to devastate worlds and kill billions of people could inflict more damage on their enemies than an Ancient who tried to keep casualties to a minimum.

During the course of the Final War, Tsyamoykyo slunk off to hide, sending parties to scavenge the remnants of the slain or pillage the pocket universes of those he had assassinated. Yaskoydray was too busy battling a coalition of his offspring to take much notice; Tsyamoykyo could be cleaned up after the war was won. The Travellers experience – or may decide – how the conflict was fought and its general course. If they all agree, then this version is what happened. If they disagree, opposed PSI checks (with Interpret level as a DM) are required to determine whose version is the correct one.

YASKOYDRAY FOUGHT A CLEAN WAR

Perhaps Yaskoydray preferred not to attack civilian populations, instead seeking to break into the fortresses of his enemies and decapitate their faction. If so, he was at a disadvantage against those who accepted wanton destruction.

YASKOYDRAY FOUGHT A DIRTY WAR

Perhaps Yaskoydray cared little for servitor populations and attacked them as an easy means of weakening his foes. It is possible that he attempted at first to fight a clean war but was angered or made desperate by the actions of others. This version of events has more shattered planets and depopulated systems, and potentially more surviving Ancients whose powerbase has been eliminated. This might lead to them being imprisoned by Yaskoydray and forced to work for him, or perhaps there are multiple factions still fighting a desultory conflict by whatever means remain to them.

YASKOYDRAY WAS MERCIFUL

As the Final War wound down, Yaskoydray stayed his hand whenever he could. He would, if possible, do enough to take an enemy out of the fight then accept a surrender or allow the Ancient to live. Some might return to his service; others may have left Charted Space or been granted a pocket universe to rule on condition they stayed inside. Similarly, planetary populations were spared once their Ancient masters were out of action. Some may have been subject to restrictions on technology, certain activities, or may have fallen to a low enough Tech Level that they became irrelevant. Some may have sworn allegiance to Yaskoydray and continued to serve him.

YASKOYDRAY WAS VENGEFUL

Perhaps Yaskoydray was not merciful; perhaps he could not afford to be. He may have had to eliminate any possibility of a powerbase that could be used by a resurgent enemy, in which case surrender was not a viable option. He may have been downright vindictive, visiting great vengeance on all he defeated in order to frighten others into submission. Brutal as this might be, it would shorten the conflict and ultimately leave more to work with afterward.

However the war was fought, it was not really won by anyone. With little left in Charted Space to work with, Yaskoydray retreated to his pocket universe to continue his work. The threat might or might not still be out there but Yaskoydray lacks the resources to deal with it in any case. He will thus be searching for another solution. Alternatively, he may have retreated to his pocket universe out of disillusionment with the people of Charted Space, or because he has something pressing to be getting on with.

THE POST-ANCIENTS ERA

After the war winds down, a steady collapse of technological societies continues for tens of millennia. Here and there a new civilisation blossoms for a while but none achieve the critical mass required to dominate even a small region. The people of Andor are one of the few Oytripin which retain the ability to caste, not least because of the records held in this very chamber. With Yaskoydray long gone, the Droyne settle into a comfortable early-starfaring lifestyle, content and stagnant.

Around -75000, Yaskoydray returns to Andor. He walks among his former people without comment, visiting landmarks still recognisable from when this was his home. The Leaders of Andor's cities are summoned in person and all gather here in the chambers beneath Eptuay. Fearful yet reverent, the Leaders commune with Yaskoydray and offer their loyalty. Yaskoydray in return promises he will protect the homeworld. Gifts are exchanged before he leaves; a fleet of advanced starships deliver fearsome weapons and powerful defensive screens. They are embedded deep in the cities and secondary record chambers are created to show Droyne how to use them. For his part, Yaskoydray receives what appears to be a tribute of servants drawn from one of the low-tech rural communities.

These are no ordinary Droyne, however. They have been selectively bred for the ultra-recessive gene that created Yaskoydray. Hidden on Andor for millennia, they are now needed. Yaskoydray has been cloning his body to create replacements but these are clones of clones of clones. New genetic material is needed. Yaskoydray departs, leaving his genetic cache in the charge of the Oytrip of Andor. He voyages among the scattered Oytripin of Charted Space, teaching the Droyne there how to caste once again. It may be that there is some difference between the Andorian Droyne, who never lost the ability to caste and others from different worlds.

Yaskoydray voyaged for a time then returned to his pocket universe. He never explained the reason for needing the genetic cache, nor the timing of his visits. There are various potential explanations.

YASKOYDRAY WAS ATTACKED

Someone or something may have entered Yaskoydray's pocket universe. If so, he will have been targeted directly but, given the difficulty of eliminating an Ancient, a longer-term plan was implemented as a backup. Yaskoydray's population of Droyne suffered immense casualties, leading to likely extinction over time. Yaskoydray knows that endlessly cloning the same body will eventually lead to defects so he maintains a cache like the one on Andor, ensuring his genetic material remains viable. This is part of his long-term plan to defeat his remaining offspring; eventually they will become defective and die off, whilst only he has the means to create new bodies indefinitely. The attack necessitated replenishing the cache. Most Oytripin will not know why Yaskoydray left his fortress and assume he came to save them from being unable to caste. If they find out he acted only out of necessity their veneration will be weakened.

YASKOYDRAY WAS CURIOUS

After more than 200,000 years working on a project, Yaskoydray tired of reports brought by his servitors and decided to take a look for himself. His own genetic cache is intact but he feels the need to check on the one at Andor, swapping a few individuals between the groups. In this alternative, Yaskoydray is in a stronger long-term position than if he was responding to an attack. He spends longer with the Oytripin he visits, to their delight in most cases, and is more strongly represented in their history.

YASKOYDRAY WAS ON A MISSION

Yaskoydray's venture out into the universe was not directly inspired by a need to visit Andor. He did so as part of a grand endeavour, even going so far as to permit some personnel from the Oytrip to take part. This was a great honour for the Oytrip, to be celebrated forever, and reminds all Droyne that Andor is the foremost of their communities. The knowledge will not be revealed to outsiders but more Droyne know that Andor is Eskayloyt in this alternative than in others. Exactly what the grand endeavour was remains unclear, unless the Travellers choose to define it.

Once his trip across Charted Space was over, Yaskoydray retreated to his pocket universe to continue his work. He made the occasional foray afterward but had little direct interaction with the Droyne or other species. The history of Andor continued to unfold without him.

THE MODERN ERA

Tens of thousands of years pass in comfortable isolation. The Droyne of Andor send out a few ships now and then, and receive visitors from other Oytripin upon occasion. The last of the war machines from the Final War run down, enabling survivor populations of humans and other species to begin building a civilisation. Spaceflight is developed by the Vilani, the Zhodani and some Vargr groups. Empires begin to blossom, clashing in unimportant wars of dominance and destruction. Finally, humans come to Andor.

Visitors from the Darrians and Zhodani come and go, never suspecting the importance of the place. The Third Imperium arises and finally reaches Andor. A misunderstanding, or perhaps human arrogance, results in conflict. A ship is destroyed and the humans naturally send a flotilla to chastise the Droyne of Andor. They are repelled. The means used might have been psionic, Ancients weapons or some other countermeasure.

THE DROYNE USED PSIONICS

The flotilla's crews are confused and suffer operational losses, leading to blue-on-blue fire incidents and an escalation of hostilities that never actually reaches the surface of Andor. As the Imperial Navy fights itself in orbit, troop ships find they are inexplicably unable to approach the planet. No shots are fired by the Droyne. Eventually the Imperials realise what is happening and pull back. A diplomatic mission is sent, resulting in what amounts to an Imperial surrender. The Psionics Suppressions carried out in the Imperium at around this time are particularly severe.

THE DROYNE USED A SUPERWEAPON

Psionic measures prove generally ineffective and TL9 weapons are not sufficient to stop the Imperial flotilla. Some damage is caused on the surface before Andor unleashed an Ancients weapon. The Imperials retreat, finally opening negotiations. These are quite amusing from the Droyne side; the Imperials demand isolation and curtailment of expansion, and since the Droyne are not interested in the latter they do not attempt to expand. The former demand is ignored but overall the Imperials decide they have got what they need and impose a meaningless blockade which the Droyne also ignore. The Droyne are not inconvenienced and the Imperials salve their egos and life returns to normal.

THE DROYNE NEGOTIATED

After token resistance, the Droyne of Andor – uncharacteristically – request negotiations. The Imperials graciously grant this and send a diplomatic party to Andor. They come back with a vague but deep conviction that Andor should be left well alone. The Imperials declare a blockade to 'protect Andor from outside interference' and promise to always have a diplomatic vessel in-system if the Droyne want to talk. They then pull back and maintain a respectful distance.

RELATIONS NORMALISED

With relations – or the lack of them – between the Imperium and Andor in place, the situation becomes one of the Droyne ignoring the Imperials and the rest of the cosmos and the Imperial nervously watching Andor in case of… some unspecified bad thing. This continues for almost 300 years, interrupted only by a single incident. An obviously Imperial ship somehow evades the Droyne's psionic and conventional scanners and lands near one of the remote Oytripin. Several specimens are taken aboard and the ship departs as the Droyne respond. It escapes but not before a telepath penetrates its psi shielding and learns two words: 'Omicron' and 'Gamma'.

It is obvious that Omicron Division has penetrated the defences of Andor and seized specimens from among the genetic cache. The Droyne are considering what to do, beginning with issuing instructions that their people must be returned. Their diplomatic party has just boarded the Imperial 'diplomatic vessel' in orbit when an unknown fleet of advanced vessels emerges from jump and attacks. The Travellers can witness the shattering of the Imperial flotilla and the fear among the Droyne of Andor – not a common emotion – as they realise they are about to be attacked by an Ancient.

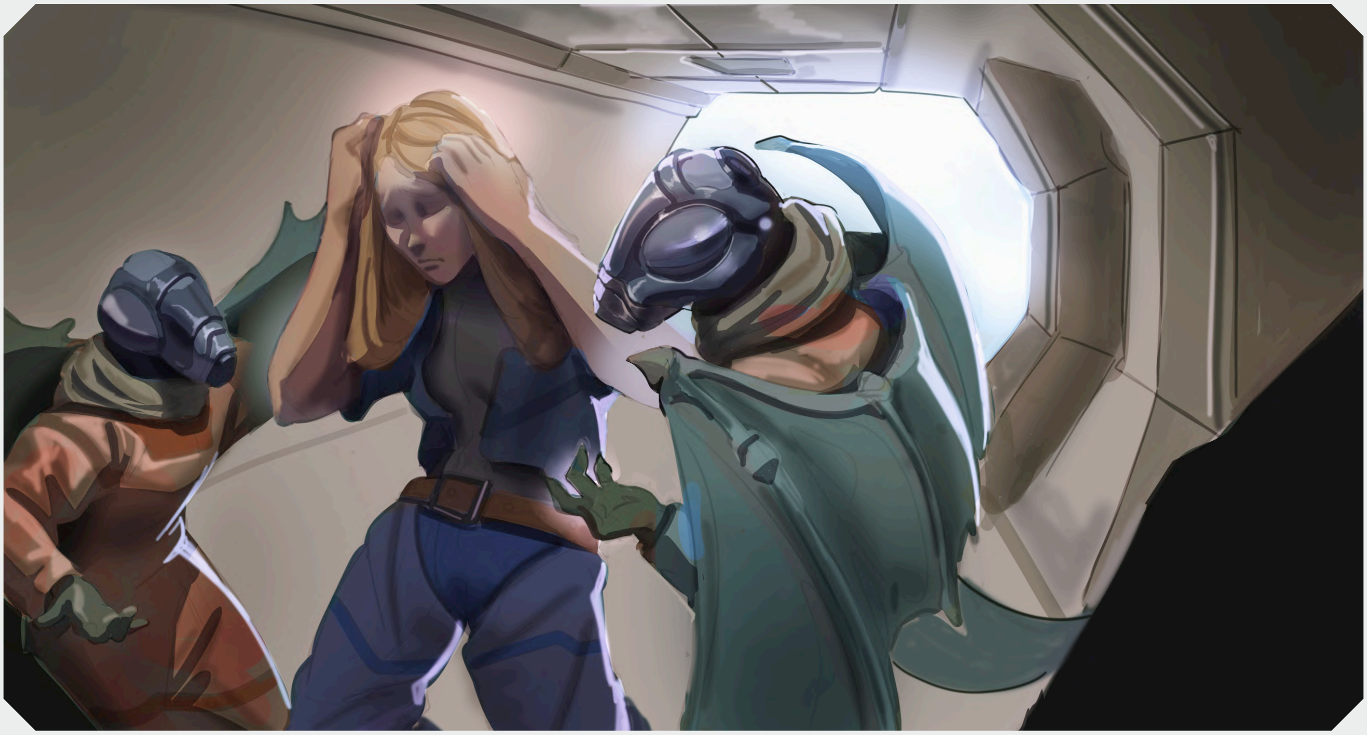
Some fear they have displeased Yaskoydray by failing to prevent the abduction, others are certain he will come to save them. Neither group is right. After smashing the Imperial fleet, the intruders begin their assault upon Andor. The full fury of the Oytrip's arsenal is unleashed and proves sufficient only to anger the attackers. Andor burns as the invaders carry off some of the genetic cache and massacre the rest.

MOMENTS OF CONFUSION

The Travellers emerge from the history-dream confused and unsteady. Helpful Workers prop up anyone having trouble standing,and vessels of restorative but distinctly weird-tasting beverages are offered. The Travellers will need to take a moment to process what they have seen and learned. The most immediately necessary fact is that Omicron Division got here just before the attack and carried off some of the genetic cache Droyne. 'Gamma' probably refers to Imperial Research Station Gamma, on Vanejen.

The Travellers have learned much about Andor and the Ancients but there is far more to what has just happened than that. *Traveller* canon is the official version of the Charted Space universe but as soon as a Referee begins a campaign they – and the Travellers – begin to decide whether the Charted Space universe will conform perfectly to official canon or diverge in large or small ways. There is an entire campaign to be played out in the history-dream but even just working through the key points creates multiple possible versions of the Charted Space universe. If the Travellers chose might-have-been outcomes that diverge from official canon the Referee must decide whether they were just that – explorations of how things might have turned out – or whether this is the truth of their current Charted Space universe.

It is recommended that, providing the Travellers stayed within plausible limits, the outcomes chosen by the Travellers are used as historical fact. This means that the Travellers have just decided if the Yaskoydray of their Charted Space universe is vengeful god or benevolent protector; whether the Imperial authorities know about Ancients technology on Andor or not. The implications of this could be far-reaching. A summary of choices is presented overleaf.



History-Dream Outcomes

Event	Choice	Implications
Rise of Yaskoydray	The Great Rebellion	Yaskoydray is less patient with his people and prone to punish rather than lead them. The Final War is more destructive than it might have been. If Yaskoydray was killed, Charted Space would have been completely different – unless he already had some offspring and his place was taken by one of them.
	Outpouring of Loyalty	Yaskoydray is pleased with his servitors and rewards them, assuming the diplomatic tour succeeds. Charted Space has additional wonders created during the Ancients era. If the tour did not succeed, the Great Rebellion will more than likely have taken place.
	The Last Stand	Yaskoydray's actions are indicative of his personality. If he was vengeful, he is a tyrant-god who rules through fear. If he showed mercy he is still feared but also respected as a stern but fair deity.
The Ancients Era	The Fate of Ekyaioyx	If Yaskoydray was somehow persuaded to spare Ekyaioyx and release him from his prison, he was reconciled and became a loyal ally. Although gravely wounded in the Final War, Ekyaioyx survived and was granted a domain far from Charted Space where he may still reside. He would come to the aid of Yaskoydray or avenge him if he heard about an attack. If Ekyaioyx was left imprisoned, he may have broken out and fought against Yaskoydray. If so, he is dead. The wreckage of his fortress might be found some day, on a remote world far from Charted Space. If Ekyaioyx was left in his prison he may still be alive and may feature in a future adventure. It is possible he is imprisoned in a pocket universe, or might have escaped and be hiding far from Charted Space.
Prelude to the Final War	Yaskoydray's Summons	The reason for Yaskoydray's summons may be important. If he was trying to unify Charted Space against an external threat it may still be extant today. If he was worried about conflict with or among his offspring, he ended up triggering what he feared. More about Yaskoydray's character is revealed here. Is he the sort to put aside his ego and ask for help, or does he just make demands? If he was disappointed with the response to his call, he may have been more vindictive towards those who did not heed it.
The Final War	Yaskoydray's War	If Yaskoydray fought a clean war, some of his offspring might have come over to his side and may have survived the conflict. The level of destruction caused by the Ancients' Final War is not as severe and there are more surviving artefacts. The Travellers may have noted the location of a site that would have been destroyed in a more vicious war and might be able to make use of it in a future adventure. If Yaskoydray fought a dirty war, there are less artefacts and surviving sites to be found. There may be many Ancients still surviving, greatly diminished and the Travellers might know where some of them are.

Event	Choice	Implications
	Yaskoydray was Merciful	If Yaskoydray was merciful at the end of the war, he is respected more than feared by Droyne who retain memories of the conflict. More enclaves and sites survive, perhaps including Droyne with advanced technology who continue to serve Yaskoydray, laying foundations for his return.
	Yaskoydray was Vengeful	A vengeful Yaskoydray was not content with crushing his enemies; atomisation was the only option. He is deeply feared and often hated by surviving Droyne communities. However, he retained greater resources at the end of the conflict and is in a better position to take control of Charted Space if and when he decides to return.
The Post-Ancients Era	Yaskoydray was Attacked	The Referee and Travellers must decide what got into the pocket universe. It may have been the threat detected long ago, or surviving offspring. Yaskoydray was concerned only with replenishing his genetic cache and does not do much during his visit to Charted Space.
	Yaskoydray was Curious	Yaskoydray conducted experiments – and may have left equipment behind – during his foray into Charted Space. The Oytripin he visited have happy and glorious memories of this time if he has been shown to be merciful and benevolent, or recall a dark time of fearing the god who walked among them if he had been vindictive and harsh.
	Yaskoydray was on a Mission	Yaskoydray and the Oytrip of Andor accomplished something that remains impressive today, if it can be found. The Oytrip retains a deep veneration for him beyond that of other Droyne communities.
The Modern Era	The Droyne used Psionics	The Psionics Suppressions went deep but were accompanied by a desire on the part of the Imperium to obtain both artificial defences and psions of their own. Omicron Division is larger and better supplied with anti-psi equipment than would otherwise be the case.
	The Droyne used a Superweapon	The Imperial authorities consider the Oytrip of Andor to be a direct physical threat rather than a subversive psionic one and desire to obtain the knowledge and artefacts now known to be there. It is possible that an attempt might be made to seize artefacts in the wake of the attack.
	The Droyne Negotiated	The Imperials are suspicious of the Oytrip and reasonably sure their diplomatic party was tampered with telepathically. However, they remain clueless about what they are dealing with and attach little importance to Andor other than wanting to keep Zhodani and psionics-seeking Imperials away.

The history-dream will reveal much to the Referee as well as the Travellers. Some factors may be relevant later in the campaign but others will become part of the background of the Referee's Charted Space universe and may be used later. Once this campaign is over the Travellers might want to find out more about what they have learned, perhaps searching for pocket-universe prisons or a potential threat to Charted Space. For now, the Travellers have become aware that something major is unfolding and have learned a little about the events that led to this point.

ATTACK IN THE SANCTUM

As the history-dream comes to an end, the Travellers are aware that something is wrong. They have been aware of the Droyne Leaders watching their experiences but suddenly two are gone. The Travellers stagger, suddenly released from the vision-state. They are temporarily confused and disorientated but quickly become aware of a commotion around them. Collecting their wits they realise that two of the Droyne Leaders in the chamber are down, torn to pieces by the fangs and claws of G482 creatures. This creates a unique situation – their entourage now have no memory whatsoever of why the Leaders they served are gone and in some cases all memory of the Leader has been expunged. This can have different effects, none of them beneficial.

There are several G482 creatures in the chamber and the Travellers have instants to react before more Droyne are killed. This is not an intentional strike on the part of Tsyamoykyo but it may have devastating effects upon Andor. Gathered here are the surviving Leaders of Leaders of the main cities. By sheer chance some of the G482s left behind on Andor have managed to get into the deep chambers. Once there, they select targets. Whilst not intelligent, these creatures are cunning and have been taught to recognise Droyne Leaders. They are striking selectively and if successful will decapitate the leadership of Andor. This will make recovery from the attack much harder and open the way for further disasters such as an attempt by the Imperium to annex the world and remove its treasures for study.

The Travellers must act fast if they want to prevent the attack. It may suit their purposes to do nothing for a while, in which case all they have to do in order to render Andor leaderless is to pause for a few moments. There are, however, some problems. The Droyne are particularly susceptible to the special ability of the G482 creature. Not one of the Droyne present in this chamber can at this point acknowledge the presence or even the existence of the creatures. Travellers who open fire may trigger a misguided attempt to protect the Leaders. There are also numerous Droyne in the way. Ideally, a more subtle solution would be advisable.

THE G482 CREATURE

The creature designated G482 is fully described in *Mysteries of the Ancients*. It was developed by Tsyamoykyo as a biological (in the sense that it is a living creature) weapon. Sufficient information is presented here to allow the Referee to use these creatures in *Wrath of the Ancients*.

G482 takes the form of an upright biped, not dissimilar to a Chirper or Droyne but physically more solid. They do not have wings but possess vestigial attachments which suggests the species G482 evolved or was modified. The creatures are not sentient but very cunning and possess deadly claws. G482 is more biological robot than living creature; it cannot breed and can only be created from immature Droyne by perverting the casteing ritual.

What makes G482 so deadly is that most people unable to acknowledge the presence or existence of the creature. This is not psionic invisibility, which would be countered by a psionic shield. The G482 effect relies upon a trait engineered into all species the Ancients modified. A combination of appearance and how the creature moves triggers this mental blind spot. Those that survive the encounter forget the creature exists and will create or look for a 'rational explanation' for why their friend is now dead. One Traveller might have no memory whatsoever of the friend whilst another starts looking for a human murderer they now have a clear memory of. In this way G482 can move undetected through a community, assassinating key people or just carrying out a slow massacre. Droyne are more susceptible to the 'cannot acknowledge' effect than all other species as the ability was developed from Droyne.

Anyone under direct attack – defined as having taken damage or been subject to an action that would have caused damage but for the protection of armour or shields – will become aware of the creature and fight back or try to escape. However, the commands of a Leader who is under attack and can therefore perceive the creature will be meaningless to someone who cannot. Those that have perceived G482 will edit it out of their consciousness as soon as the immediate threat subsides. Each will construct a memory of something that could explain what happened, or be absolutely sure they were not present at the time. Their belief is sincere and the memory they create is indistinguishable from any real one. Someone who has a different explanation must have remembered it wrong or confused people with others. Even pointing out the jarring differences in stories about how someone died does not work – the individual simply cannot accept the existence of the creatures.

Most species affected have the ability to throw off the conditioning if they survive the encounter. Droyne, however, do not. It must be broken by other means. A lengthy and patiently conducted logical progression might cause a Droyne to acknowledge that something other than what they remembered might have happened but it is far more effective to use telepathic methods. If the Travellers think to try, they can show

Droyne what they are seeing or have seen. The effects are startling; Andorian culture includes legends of creatures of this sort and actually seeing one is terrifying. It is not just the physical threat that inspires such terror but also the thought that the Droyne might soon forget the encounter again and become completely vulnerable. There are also questions to be asked about what has been edited out of Droyne history in this manner.

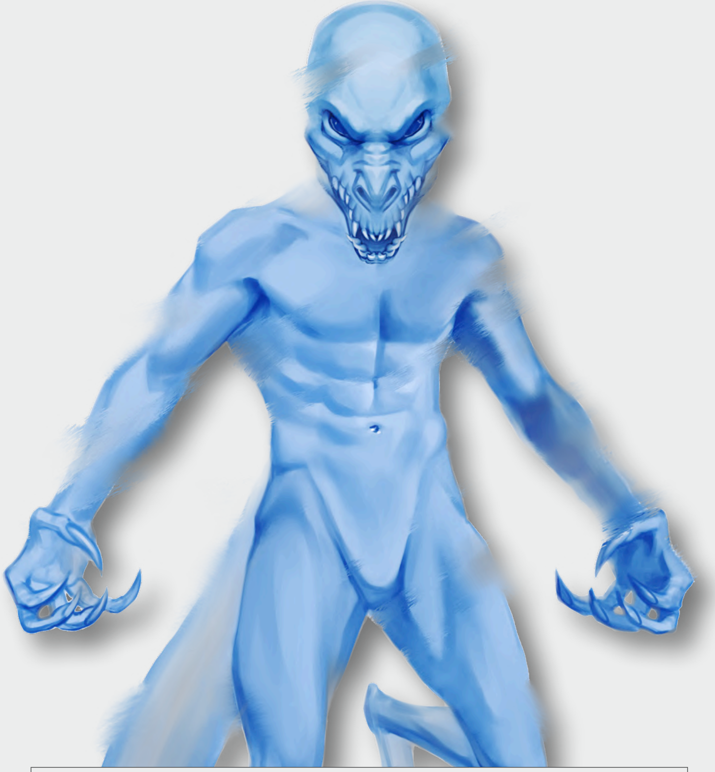
Planting an image of the creatures in someone's mind and thereby allowing them to perceive what is really happening is an Average (8+) Telepathy check. However, not all psionically shielded individuals will be receptive to communication in this manner. As a general rule, those who have already been in contact are likely to allow the image to be transmitted. Others will have to be persuaded. This might not be all that difficult, unless the Droyne has reasons to suspect or be contemptuous of the Traveller.

The G482 metabolism is based on ambient energy rather than breaking down food, although it does need protein to grow new tissue. Under normal circumstances – around room temperature and normal light conditions – the creature functions at its base rate. This is detailed in *Mysteries of the Ancients* but since the chamber has normal lighting and heat conditions the creatures will be functioning at their base level.

The composition of the creature is such that most weapons are relatively ineffective. Penetrating attacks such as bullets and harpoons are reduced to D3s – so a firearm normally doing 3D-3 does only 3D3-3 damage. Most other attacks – including crushing implements and direct energy such as lasers, fire or electricity, apply a modifier of -1 per dice. Thus a flame gun doing 5D damage does 5D-5. Cutting attacks do normal damage.

THE TACTICAL SITUATION

In the chamber are six of the greatest Leaders among the people of Andor, gathered to witness the Travellers' reaction to the history-dream. Each has an entourage of lesser Leaders, Drones, Sports, Warriors, Technicians and Workers sufficient to support their endeavours. This is around 30 people in each group. Exact numbers vary but given the circumstances most have brought along a force of six combat personnel made up of a Leader-of-Warriors and five Warriors, plus their own personal guards. These number four to ten and will include a Leader-of Warriors if there are more than five Warriors.



Animal	Hits	Speed
G482	35	8m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 3, Survival 1	
Attacks	Claws and Teeth (2D+2)	
Traits	Heightened Senses	
Behaviour	Special	

Guards and combat teams operate differently. Personal guards remain close to their charge at all times. Individuals or pairs might move out to intercept a threat or to get a better angle around cover but will quickly return to a defensive posture. Combat teams operate more freely and will join forces with those of other Leaders if this seems efficient. Situational awareness is normally very good, since observers can convey information instantly and sharing images by telepathy is commonplace.

The remainder of each entourage is made up of non-combat personnel. They do not fight as such but take supporting roles that free Warriors to perform their tasks. A Warrior who is downed will be ignored by comrades if there are still hostiles to engage; retrieving them is the task of Workers, who will run straight past enemies to perform their duty. This is not suicidal bravery but complete confidence that each member of a group will do their job. Non-combat personnel will attempt to block incoming threats by stepping in front of their Leader, possibly thwarting the attack even if they do not attempt to harm the attacker.

As the Travellers gather their wits, two of the Leaders-of-Leaders are already down and G482 assailants are approaching the others. No-one in the chamber is aware of the creatures. Those who have lost their Leaders have reacted in different ways. Some seem to have simply died on the spot, others are just standing perfectly still. Most of those who are moving are wandering aimlessly or marching quickly towards the chamber's entrances. This behaviour depends on what memories the Droyne created to explain the sudden demise of their Leader. None can perceive a threat, even if seconds ago they were desperately leaping to the defence of their Leader. In some cases all memory of the Leader has been erased and since Droyne follow Leaders all their lives this leaves an inexplicable gap. Those who are wandering or leaving the chamber are looking for a new Leader from their city to serve or trying to get back to the one they now believe they have always served. The rest are just trying to process what has happened and in some cases this has caused what amounts to a total shutdown.

The Travellers need to act quickly if they want to stop the attack. However, they should be smart enough to realise that opening fire in a chamber where two great Leaders-of-Leaders have just died without explanation will almost certainly result in them being identified as the assailants. There is a lot of firepower in this chamber, and once the Travellers are fighting the Droyne they will be attacked by all of them… and the rest of the planet will join in. It may be possible to halt the violence somehow, perhaps by telepathically showing what really happened, but if not the Travellers will be assumed to be part of the attacking force. A running fight back to their ship looks like the only option at this point.

The G482 creatures may not be able to take out the remaining Leaders instantly. Their assault on the first two was coordinated and came as a complete surprise. Even so, some were killed before they got through the shields and personal protection of their targets. Now they are diminished in number and scattered as they dash through crowds of Droyne or jump over them to reach their targets. Once the attack begins everyone will be able to perceive the creatures that are actually engaging a target. Those still en route may remain undetected by everyone but the Travellers. One solution to the problem of seeming hostile would be to wait until all four great Leaders are under attack and only then assist them. This is rather risky, however. As the threat approaches some of the Droyne will half-perceive the creatures, starting with a sense of dread and a feeling of imminent threat which eventually resolves into perception of the creatures.

Each of the Leaders is subject to a series of attacks as G482 creatures reach them. Personal guards and attendants will try to deal with the creatures but since they only become aware of them as they make an attack it is not possible to simply shoot them down as they approach. Instead they are forced to resort to dragging them off the target or trying to grapple with them whilst others use hand weapons. Warriors have a small dagger as part of their regalia but Droyne are not adept at hand-to-hand combat.

The area around every Leader is chaotic. Warriors try to grapple and stab the creatures; with the help of Workers they attempt to drag the assailants sufficiently far enough away that shooting becomes an option. The Droyne are willing to risk hitting others who are holding the creature and will accept without comment a situation in which the Travellers do likewise. All Droyne serve their Oytrip to the maximum extent and if that means taking a stray laser bolt whilst clinging to the arm of a G482 then so be it. To flinch from such a duty would render the Droyne's existence meaningless.

The creatures are strong and implacable, however. They will kill Warriors or others who get in the way but are just as likely to hurl them aside in order to break through to the main target. The result is a melee in which Droyne are being flung aside or collapse, bleeding, to be trampled underfoot. This is no simple firefight with space pirates; it is a complex problem which can be solved in a variety of ways. The measures taken by the Travellers will determine who survives the attacks and who does not.

The skill listings for the example Droyne here only include what is necessary for this scene. Many Droyne skills are unique to the species and can be found in *Aliens of Charted Space Volume 2*.

ANDORIAN DROYNE LEADER

The forcefield is generated by the Leader's rod and is reduced in effectiveness by -1 every time it is penetrated. Thus initial attacks will knock the Leader about but probably cause little harm, but the field can be overwhelmed. The G482 creatures are instinctively aware of the field and where it comes from, so may knock the rod away if they can. It becomes inert once out of the Leader's grasp. These rods are symbolic of leadership over the whole of Andor's population and used in many important rituals. They may even have been gifted to the Droyne of Andor by Yaskoydray himself. Taking one for any reason would render the whole world hostile, whilst retrieving one and returning it with some semblance of ceremony would impress surviving Leaders.

ANDORIAN DROYNE LEADER

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	—	—

TRAITS	—			
STR	3	**INT**	12	**SKILLS**
DEX	9	**EDU**	12	Gun Combat 0, Telepathy 4
END	5	**PSI**	13	

WEAPONS	Leader-rod (3D, Zero-G, 6 shots)
ARMOUR	Regalia (+2), Leader-rod (+8)

DROYNE GUARDS AND WARRIORS

The eclipse shield is a large but lightweight shield carried by some warriors. It is said to resemble a planet in partial eclipse, with a crescent shaped primary edge extending well beyond the user's flank and a concave secondary edge. This permits a Warrior to use a firearm in the other hand, turning his body to receive protection then angling back to shoot. Eclipse shields are almost always near-transparent, giving observers the impression of a shimmering 'force-field' protecting their users.

Eclipse Shields are not intended for close combat, although they will serve if necessary. Their role is to stop projectiles and energy weapon discharges. Most are produced in a right-handed design but a large complement of Warriors may have some left-handed shield users to cover that flank. In close combat an eclipse shield functions as a normal shield, but against firearms the user is treated as being in cover. A second Droyne can shelter behind the shield of another but cannot make attacks without moving out from behind its cover.

DROYNE GUARDS AND WARRIORS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	—	—

TRAITS	—			
STR	10	**INT**	4	**SKILLS**
DEX	8	**EDU**	3	Gun Combat (energy) 2, Melee 0
END	12	**PSI**	9	

WEAPONS	Dagger (1D+2), Laser Carbine (3D, Zero-G)
ARMOUR	Eclipse Shield, Fighting-Armour (+15)

OTHER DROYNE

Other Droyne present will try to help as best they can, bringing ammunition or trying to drag a creature away. Most cannot achieve anything other than to be a barrier between their Leader and an attack. They will stand their ground fearlessly and be cut down.

OTHER DROYNE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	—	—

TRAITS	—			
STR	5	**INT**	5	**SKILLS**
DEX	5	**EDU**	3	—
END	4	**PSI**	6	

SAVING THE LEADERS

Each of the Leaders-of-Leaders is in a slightly different situation. Their personalities and inclinations vary, such that saving one and losing another might affect the attitude of Andor as a whole towards the Travellers. It will also affect future decisions and perhaps the course of history on Andor itself. This is no simple firefight; it is a chaotic situation in which much is happening all at once. The Travellers' decisions on who to defend may be based on proximity and tactical factors, or they may assign greater importance – either to Andor or to their own designs – to a particular individual.

It is not necessary to play out the whole situation as a mass combat, although that option always exists. Instead, the situation can be abstracted unless the Travellers are in direct proximity to a threat. The normal rules can be used to resolve combat between Travellers and the creatures. G482s will fight Travellers and anyone else who gets in the way but their targets are the Leaders. Their interest in others is limited to getting past them; even survival is meaningless if the goal can be achieved.

Each Leader is under attack by one or more creatures, with others close by and some moving in after taking out their first target. They will attack until all are dead. Rather than play out every claw strike or laser shot, the defence of each Leader is abstracted with their defences, capabilities of their guards and warriors, and the number of assailants providing DMs.

For each of the targets, each round an Offence and a Defence check is made. Offence is the ability of the creatures to reach and kill their target. Defence is the ability of their guards to hold back, drag off or even eliminate their opponents. The Effect of these checks will determine the outcome of the fight. For the attackers, an Average (8+) check is made with DM+2 for each additional creature within reach. If the Effect is negative, one or more creatures are dragged away or otherwise rendered incapable of reaching their target next round. These creatures are not killed but entangled with guards and other Droyne, among whom they may be causing terrible carnage. The Droyne do not care about their losses; their Leaders must be protected at all costs.

A positive Effect is consulted on the Leader Survival table. Note that personal armour and shields are not applied against damage as this is an abstract system. A new Offence check is made each round. If the result is less than the current State, the Leader suffers 1D damage but their State does not get any worse. Only if the Effect exceeds previous levels are new results applied.

Defence is handled similarly. Each Leader has a Defence score based on the size of their entourage and proportion of Warriors it contains. Each round, the defenders make an Average (8+) check using their Defence DM. Effect 6+ puts one G482 out of the fight and permits an immediate new check. Effect 6+ again

Leader Survival

Effect	State	Notes
0–2	Embattled	The Leader is under attack but his defences are holding for now. No injury has been sustained.
3–5	Hotly Engaged	The Leader has been struck and personal defences are depleted. Worse, some of his entourage are down. Further attacks against him gain a DM of +D3.
6–8	Injured	As per Hotly Engaged but in addition the Leader has suffered minor injuries equivalent to 1D damage. This indicates his personal defences are failing.
9–12	Wounded	The Leader has suffered a serious wound, equivalent to an additional 2D damage. Most of the entourage is down, with the effect that further attacks by the creatures gain an additional DM+3.
13–15	Downed	The Leader is down and seriously injured. An additional 3D damage is taken. This may be enough to mortally wound the Leader but the creatures will not stop attacking until 16+ (Killed) has been achieved. Attacks gain an additional DM+3.
16+	Killed	The Leader is killed, torn apart and partially eaten. Followers react similarly to those who have already lost their Leader and are out of the fight. Remaining G482 creatures will go after a new target.

takes out another and can repeat indefinitely. Any other result indicates a desperate scramble which impedes the attackers which is already reflected in their need to make an Offence check but whilst creatures might be injured none are put out of action.

OAYRK (8)

Oayrk is already down when the Travellers enter the situation. He was swarmed by nine of the creatures and taken completely by surprise. These nine are now leaping and dashing towards other targets, selected by the Referee. Some may be slaughtering Oayrk's confused and listless entourage. When they enter the fray is up to the Referee but it should take them two to four rounds to get to another target, depending on distance.

SAMSSES (9)

Samsses is the most likely target for the nine G482s that just killed Oayrk. He is already under attack by two of the creatures, giving them an initial Offence DM of +2. His personal entourage is about average for his station, granting no DM on Defence checks. Samsses is not in too much danger at present but will be swarmed if the additional creatures nearby attack him before assistance arrives.

SEVUKOY (10)

Sevukoy is under attack by a single creature when the situation begins, giving an Offence DM of +0. His entourage is Warrior-heavy and he has an additional six-Warrior squad with him, granting DM+6 on his Defence checks. Four points of this DM can be transferred to another Leader if Sevukoy sends his squad to assist but his bodyguards will always remain with him. It is possible that some of the nine creatures that killed Oayrk will come after him instead of Samsses, or that he will be attacked from the other side.

MYUEMOSS (11)

Myuemoss has a standard entourage in terms of guards and Warriors, giving no DM to his Defence checks. His high position grants DM+2 until creatures are able to Hotly Engage him. No creatures are attacking him at the beginning of the incident but one is D3 rounds away and others might follow. Myuemoss is a special case, in that the G482 creatures will try to carry him off rather than kill him. They are willing to wound him and might kill him by accident but will drag him away rather than finish him off.

OYSYUAM (12)

Oysyuam has a standard entourage. Two creatures are already attacking him, with DM+2. Another is D3 rounds away and more may arrive depending on who is chosen as a target by those that have killed Oayrk and Uptsyux.

UPTSYUX (13)

Uptsyux is already dead. He was swarmed in the first attack and seven of the creatures are now moving away from his torn body in search of more targets. They may go after any of the three Leaders in the central part of the chamber. Uptsyux had an additional contingent of Warriors who are now wandering listlessly about the chamber. They absolutely will not obey commands from the Travellers but if they can be shown the creatures, perhaps by telepathic means, they will recognise them and launch a fanatical attack. This can be used to give DM+6 on the Defence check of any Leader still standing, or the Warriors can engage D3+1 creatures in close combat and stall them, preventing them from attacking any of the Leaders.

THE TRAVELLERS

The default situation is that there are 20 G482 creatures in the chamber. This can be amended if the Travellers are having it too easy – after all, the Travellers' initial tactical assessment of the situation was conducted whilst waking from a psionic dream amid total chaos. The first count might be off a bit, or more creatures could enter the chamber during the fight.

The Travellers can of course take mundane – if perhaps heroic – actions during the fight. Well-aimed shots might take out a creature or someone who has begun to develop immense physical prowess might even hurl one off a Leader and stomp it into paste. Such actions will work, but the Travellers have other options.

COMMUNICATING

If the Travellers try to psionically contact any Droyne in the chamber they will find them rather preoccupied if under attack, and little more receptive to contact if they are not. The Travellers will have to convince the Droyne to 'listen' to them. Warriors, Workers and Technicians will ignore the Travellers' communications as such matters do not concern them. Leaders are unlikely to lower their mental shields to receive communication even if they are not under direct attack. If the Travellers know enough about Droyne society they may think to go through Sports or Drones to reach their masters. Sports are ambassadors for the Oytrip and more used to communication with outsiders, whilst Drones are generally wise enough to realise that external contact is worth the risk. An alternative would be to contact the Leaders-of-Warriors who command the combat teams.

Once contact is made, the Travellers will need to pass a Very Difficult (12+) Persuade check if they want to get their message across meaningfully. Language is not a barrier if using telepathy but differences in way of thinking and the outlandishness of the message will be a problem. Travellers who just rely on the skill check can take their chances but the Referee should grant positive DMs to those who make an effort to tailor their message to the Droyne way of thinking or who otherwise make a good case.

Sports and Drones may be persuaded to convince their masters to talk to the Travellers, or might set up a multi-way contact with Warriors. The Travellers now have a chance to show the Droyne what is happening, perhaps by feeding them a real-time stream of what they can see. If a Leader orders Warriors to shoot at what a strange offworlder is seeing the Warriors will ignore what their own senses are telling them and obey. This can make Warriors more effective or bring those who are orphaned by the loss of their Leaders into the fray.

DIRECT INTERVENTION

Whilst shooting and fighting are rather mundane options, the Travellers may be able to intervene in more exotic ways. Travellers with the right psionic powers might be able to hurl G482s away from their targets or send them hurtling into the ceiling. Psionic assault or confusion is also possible, or the Travellers may be able to implant a suggestion into a creature that stops it attacking. If done cleverly enough this might even be used to reveal the presence of the creatures to those unengaged. Nearby G482s cause a sense of dread that can cause people to become aware of them and once aware the Drone can act. It might be possible to make a creature trigger a defensive response in some of the Droyne or even turn on its fellows.

Those already under attack will be entirely aware of the creatures and need direct assistance rather than help in detecting them. This can be provided second-hand, by Droyne who have become aware and will now rush to aid their Leaders. Alternatively, the Travellers can provide direct assistance in all manner of ways. Not all the parameters of the G482 creature are known, so it is possible that a cobbled-together sonic or electromagnetic device might confuse them. Cold is known to slow them down and weaken them, and whilst conventional fire extinguishers and the like are not available there may be other ways to drop the temperature.

INSIDE THE MIND OF A G482

The G482 creature is driven by primal urges rather than conscious choice, which can be overwhelming. However, it is not hard to manipulate the creatures this way and indeed this is how they are trained. Their memories, such as they are, contain fleeting images of containment pens and feeding times, with an underlying sense of wrongness and pain. The Travellers may infer from this – correctly – that the process of converting an immature Droyne into a G482 causes it to retain a flicker of consciousness which is just enough to comprehend the perversion of what it might have been.

The creatures have been given images of what Droyne Leaders look like by psionic means and are recognising them by their regalia and how they are always surrounded by an entourage. This is entirely predictable but there is more. The creatures have been taught to recognise Myuemoss specifically and have a compulsion to wound but not kill him. They will only recognise him if they approach within three metres or so but will try to drag him away instead of killing him. A G482 will not strike a killing blow against Myuemoss under any circumstances but might kill him by accident.

The reason for this is unclear from the G482's minds; they are just doing as programmed. In fact, Tsyamoykyo wanted to capture him for interrogation and perhaps conversion to his side. Possession of Andor would be a great status symbol, even if the only one to witness this status was himself.

PSIONIC INTERVENTION

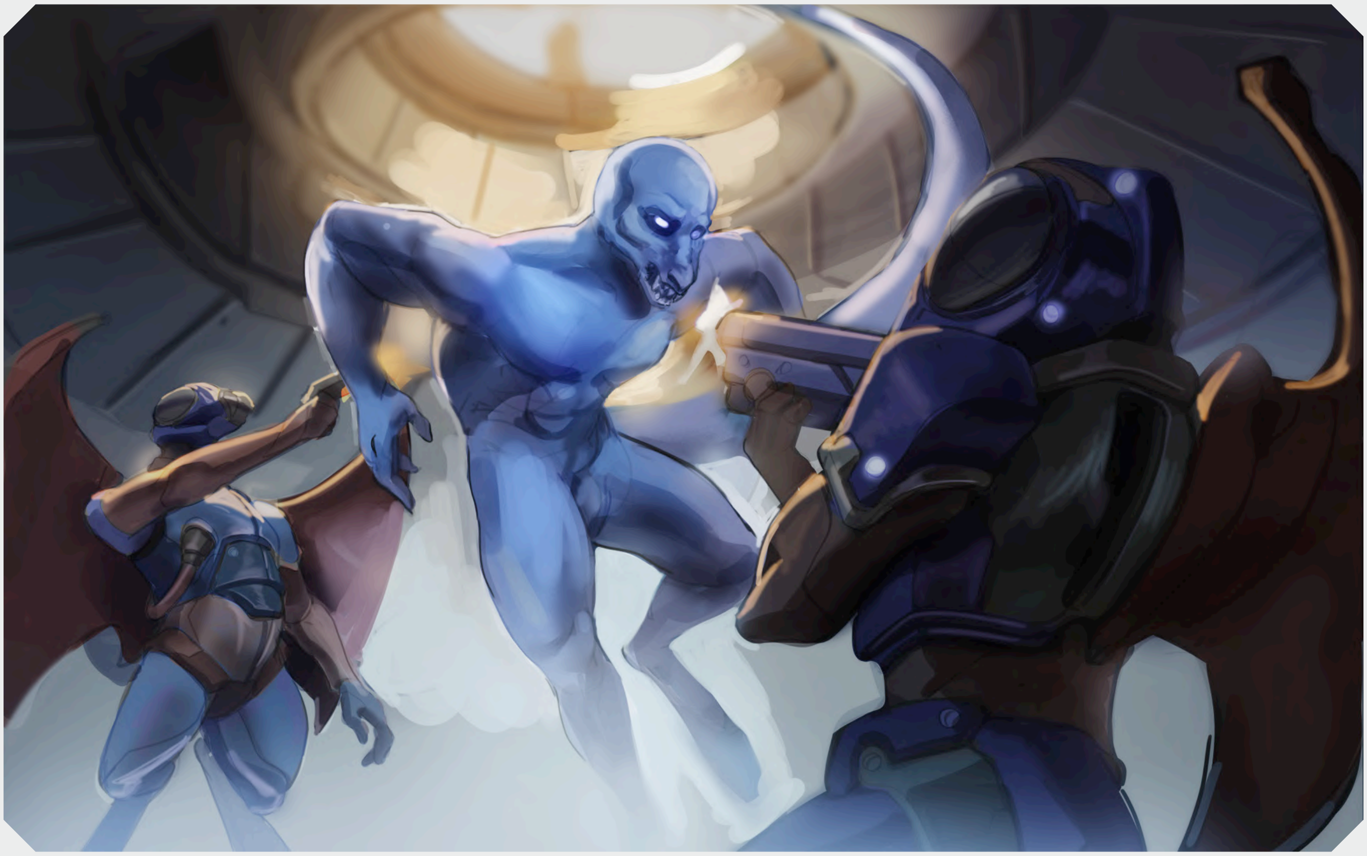
The Travellers might be able to experiment with pulling a G482 into a psionic nightmare. This is possible if they have the Impose ability, although they are unlikely to possess it yet; a Traveller might have taken the ability as a General benefit during their uplift process, in which case they can use it. There is an alternative in this case. Since the Travellers are just coming out of the dream-state they can use its lingering vestiges to impose a vision even if they do not have the specific ability. They are treated as having Impose 0 and Interpret 0 if they do not have a higher level.

Drawing a G482 into a nightmare is not all that difficult since the creatures are not sentient. All PSI checks gain DM+4 against such simple minds when forging a narrative nightmare, although the experience will be unpleasant for the Traveller. A nightmare can be used to obtain a little information or to destroy the creature and if well-handled might turn it against others of its kind.

Psionic intervention can also be used on a larger scale. Since the Travellers are still connected to the fading vision, they may be able to use this to create a vision of their own. It will be rudimentary but could contain images that warn the Droyne of what is happening or even allow them to feed position and targeting data to the Leaders-of-Warriors. The Travellers have 2D rounds to begin this before the vision fades completely. If they begin within this time, Drones will realise what is happening and join the effort. This gives everyone in the chamber a complete tactical picture and full understanding of what is happening, enabling a coordinated effort that will wipe out the intruders within moments.

AFTERMATH

When the last creature goes down, the Travellers face a new problem; Droyne are particularly susceptible to the forget-me effect of the creatures. Faced with a scene of carnage and no possible culprits other than the Travellers, it is entirely possible the Droyne will form a new memory of the Travellers betraying them. This will end badly for all concerned. The Travellers may be able to forestall this by various means. One option is to allow a Droyne to scan the Traveller's recent memories. Whilst the Droyne are programmed to instantly forget the G482 creature, the Travellers broke that conditioning long ago. This will be confusing for the scanning Droyne but they will at least get the impression that the Travellers could not have been responsible. This makes further discussion possible.



The Travellers should be permitted to solve this themselves if at all possible, since this is their story. However, there is a way out of the problem which can be triggered by the Travellers themselves or a smart Leader. There is a record of what just happened in the patterns on the walls, put there automatically by the senior Drones in each entourage, made during the attack after the Droyne were able to perceive the creatures. Watching the vision created is confusing and painful for the Droyne but whilst they are perceiving a vision of the attack they can see everything that happened.

The result is the psionic equivalent of an indrawn breath. There are legends of a creature that walks unseen and is forgotten after it passes and the senior Droyne are all now thinking the same thing – how many times has this happened? They also know this is the work of someone powerful, possibly an Ancient, and since the genetic cache has been wiped out it is unlikely to be Yaskoydray. Andor wanted no part of the desultory conflict going on elsewhere and indeed had a strong compulsion to stay out of it in order to protect the genetic cache. Now it has come to them and the Leaders-of-Leaders must decide what to do.

THE CONCLAVE OF LEADERS

If the Travellers did something that made the Droyne hostile they will have to deal with the situation. It is always possible to step back from violence if the Travellers can present a clear case for this being in the best interests of Andor as a whole. Droyne fear but they do not hate. They will remember an enemy forever but one who was mistaken or at least honourable might earn trust somehow. The same cannot be said for those who deceive. If the Travellers have behaved this way they may be in trouble. However, the Referee does have a way to restore relations between the Droyne of Andor and the Travellers, at least enough to permit some dialogue.

After the fight is over, the Travellers all begin to feel very strange. They may recognise this as a symptom of an uplift episode and deduce it was triggered by the psionic dream they just experienced. They are unprepared for its potence, however, and will be rendered more or less helpless as the wave of confusion and disorientation sweeps over them. During this time their thoughts will essentially leak out and can be picked up by any nearby telepath – and there are plenty of those. If the Travellers were well-intentioned but made bad choices, or if there are similar extenuating circumstances, the Droyne will cease hostilities and attempt to open communications once again. On the other hand, if the Travellers are blatantly hostile or self-centred the Droyne will be even more convinced of their enmity. In this case the Travellers will have to escape as best they can.

Assuming there is no hostility or it ceases, the surviving Leaders-of-Leaders hold a telepathic conference. Myuemoss – or whomever replaces him if he has been killed – has the greatest influence but all of the Leaders-of-Leaders contribute to the discussion. The Travellers cannot take part but can influence it by actions already taken. The subject being debated is: how do we proceed regarding these strangers? Some of the Leaders are extremely cautious or do not want to deviate from the old ways, whilst Myuemoss feels they are worth taking a risk on. The outcome of the debate is determined by a score resulting from the following:
If Myuemoss was killed: -4
For each other Leader-of-Leaders that was killed: -2
For each Leader-of-Leaders who survived but was wounded: +1
For each Leader-of-Leaders who survived unwounded: +2

The Travellers' actions will also be considered. Although they cannot participate directly in the debate as they are experiencing great mental confusion at present, their actions will influence the outcome. Each Traveller may pick one action they have taken since arriving on Andor and make a Difficult (10+) Persuade check with a DM assigned by the Referee based on that action. If, for some reason, a Traveller wants to highlight an action seen as negative by the Droyne, the DM can be negative.

The action is assigned a DM equal to +1–4 depending on how the Droyne are likely to perceive it. Most actions, such as fighting to assist a Leader or assisting in the elimination of the whole G482 force, are worth +1–2. More extreme actions, such as single-handedly saving a Leader-of-Leaders when his whole entourage was downed and suffering grave wounds in the process, are worth +3 or possibly even +4. This is nothing to do with glory or heroism; it is more that the individual has demonstrated they will defend the Oytrip even in the utmost extremity and is therefore valuable to it. The most worthy actions, as far as the Droyne see it, have nothing to do with the fight. A Traveller who has been respectful and can find a way to present their actions since they arrived as being in the best interests of the Oytrip of Andor may be able to claim DM+3 or +4 even if they did little during the fight. Droyne do not think like humans and what matters to them may not be readily apparent.

The total arising from the outcome of the fight, plus the combined Effect of the Travellers' Persuade checks, will determine the outcome of the conference.

Friends of the Oytrip can expect to be treated as honoured guests whenever they return. If the Imperial blockade is re-established the Travellers will be given transponder codes that will cause Imperial ships to sheer off and abort an intercept or perhaps even broadcast a polite welcome and offer to escort the Travellers through the interdiction zone. On-planet, they will be received with great ceremony and hospitality suitable for honoured guests. The Travellers will be able to ask for minor aid – repairs to a ship, a handful of TL9 devices or weapons, a few hundred thousand Credits worth of gemstones – but little more than that. These are trivial things for a planetary Oytrip. The Travellers will not be able to ask the Droyne to deploy personnel or get involved in offworld affairs.

Travellers deemed to be important to the Oytrip are not necessarily loved or revered. Indeed, the Droyne are rather fearful of such weighty figures and what they might drag the Oytrip into. On the other hand, Andor had already been attacked when the Travellers arrived, so on balance they are worth supporting. The Droyne will offer to send ships and Warriors wherever the Travellers need them. However, these are TL9 vessels and troops armed with TL9 weapons. The Oytrip will not allow the Travellers to take away Ancients artefacts or risk them being damaged or destroyed. In the case where the Droyne consider the Travellers critical to their future they may be willing to do so but the Travellers will still have to present a solid case for the deployment. They can call upon large numbers of personnel and ships. The Oytrip may even be willing to consider long-term policy changes to accommodate the Travellers.

Before they leave Andor, the Travellers will be introduced to an individual named Saynyu and asked to take him with them. They will also have the chance to do anything else they want but the Referee needs to bear in mind that the Oytrip is reeling from a devastating attack and does not have time for non-essential tasks. If the Travellers suggest it, one task the Droyne will consider entirely essential is developing an immunity to G482 invisibility. Even the Leaders have not realised it is possible to create such a capability but if they are given some reason to think it can be done it becomes one of their top priorities.

Teaching the Droyne of Andor to recognise the G482 is not a quick or easy process but it can be done. The Travellers will need to spend a few days working with Sports and Drones, with Leaders overseeing the process, to help them create a psionic trigger artwork that will result in the necessary changes. Droyne can then be sent to witness it, which will be an extremely traumatic experience for many. The end result, however, is that the Travellers will have hardened Andor against a repeat of this attack and done its people a great service. The support offered by the Oytrip is increased one level.

PERSONAL AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The history-dream is a trigger for another stage of the uplift package the Travellers are experiencing. Over the next few days they will undergo physical and mental changes which will be apparent to the Droyne even if the Travellers do not really notice them. Naturally, the Droyne do not comment on the inane manners of other species but they are aware

Conference Outcome

Value	Result
0	The Travellers are allowed to leave but told not to come back. They receive no further aid from Andor.
1–4	The Travellers are recognised as minor and rather ineffectual friends of the Oytrip. They receive no aid but may return in future if there is good reason.
5–8	The Travellers are recognised as friends of the Oytrip. They will be welcome here and might request some minor assistance but nothing more.
9–12	The Travellers are recognised as important to the future of the Oytrip and the Droyne in general. They will be offered significant assistance.
13+	The Oytrip considers the Travellers to be critical to its future and perhaps the course of history. They will be offered major assistance.

and concerned about what is happening. However, the attitude of the Oytrip to the Travellers is already decided. It may improve if they help the Droyne to detect G482 but will only be downgraded if they act in a highly inappropriate manner.

The Travellers may get a chance to try out their new abilities during this time. There is plenty to do and they may be permitted to assist. Eliminating the last of the attackers, stabilising the cities and beginning the work of reconstruction will be a lengthy task. If the Travellers want to take part in this they can but in the meantime there are survivors of the genetic cache still alive at Research Station Gamma and other events are unfolding. They will need to get underway at some point.

The Travellers might indulge their curiosity during this period, perhaps visiting the site of the genetic cache massacre. There is nothing remarkable about the community that used to exist here; it was a rural Droyne population who lived in the traditional manner. The surviving structures are simply built, with no evidence of personal property or individual wealth. Most were farmers, hunters or crafters who shared their tools, food and results of their efforts. The overall impression is one of peaceful harmony, which was shattered by the arrival of offworld troops intent on genocide.

There are no survivors. Not one. Every single member of the community was rounded up and either taken offworld or shot with what would appear to be fusion guns. They had no weapons more complex than a spear or bow but that mattered nothing to the attackers. The Travellers might realise this is more than a simple mass murder; it is the price of ambition. All these people wanted was to live in peace but first they were used as a genetic repository by Yaskoydray and then they were slaughtered by Tsyamoykyo to deny him its use. The path to greatness is often paved with such victims, which might provoke some soul-searching on the part of the Travellers as they develop their own capabilities.

The Travellers might go the other way, of course. They might try to use the chaos on Andor as an opportunity to profit – which is unlikely to go anywhere – or to steal artefacts. If the Travellers go down this route they can take their chances. The Droyne will resist with the same tenacity as they faced the first attack and will be forever hostile to the Travellers. If the Travellers are sufficiently well equipped that they can take on a planet, they may be able to carry off some artefacts. This will require getting through a living barrier of low-value Workers, which can be done with enough firepower. The Referee must determine the outcome of such actions and what the Travellers manage to grab. They are becoming minor gods and it is their actions that will demonstrate what sort of gods they intend to be.

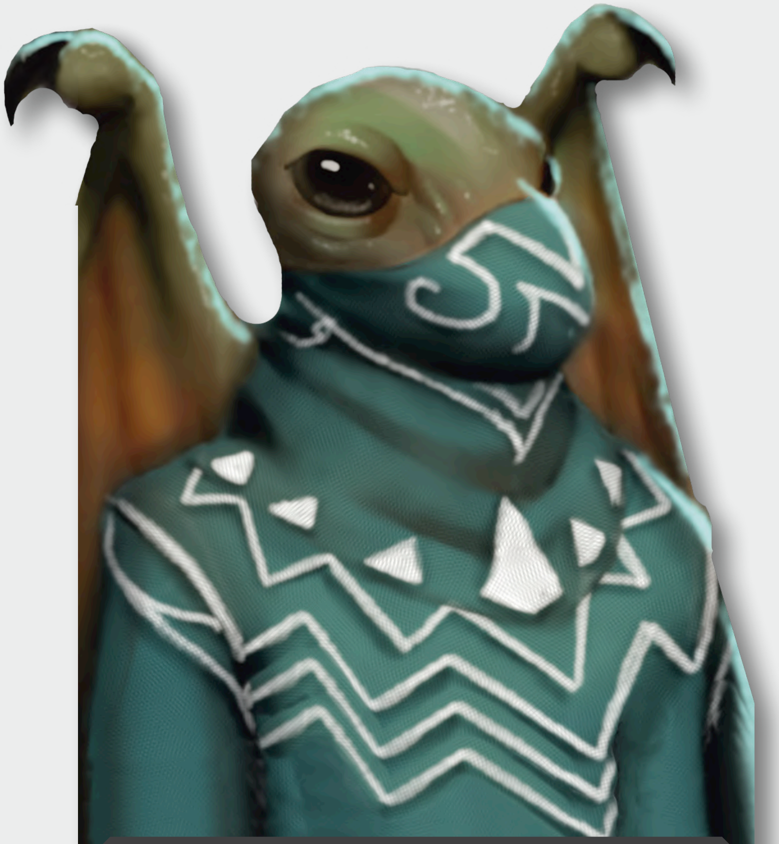
Whatever route the Travellers choose to go down, sooner or later the Imperials will realise something is amiss. The Droyne will not report the incident but a routine supply vessel will arrive within a day or two. After a hasty investigation the ship will depart and a little over two weeks later the first navy squadrons emerge from jump. Investigation will take months, not least due to the usual Droyne lack of communication and during this time the blockade will be reinforced with ever more warships.

The 'Andor Incident' will be kept quiet by the navy, although there will be rumours and the occasional piece of journalism about the suspicious redeployment of large naval forces. Rumours and conspiracy theories will fly about the datanets but nobody outside of Andor will ever know what really happened. As for the Travellers, if they are associated with Andor they can simply ignore the blockade flotilla's requests for information and come and go as they please. If they are now hostile to Andor they face Ancients superweapons if they return, making the Imperial blockade something of a triviality.

SAYNYU, DROYNE SPORT

Saynyu is a very unusual Droyne. Up until the attack in the chamber, this was not the case. He was a Sport, adept in his tasks and well valued by his Oytrip, but not remarkable in any way. His duties were to represent his Leader to others and bring the entreaties of lesser Leaders before his master. He did this well until… something happened. Now he has no memory of Uptsyux, the Leader-of-Leaders he served. Others can tell him about his Leader, and he knows he must have served someone, but he simply cannot remember.

Where others collapsed and died, or invented memories in which they had always served Uptsyux' replacement, Saynyu just has a hole in his very being. For a Droyne, service is everything and without his memories of service Saynyu is nothing. Yet for some reason he is unable or unwilling to simply die. He could at any time choose to undergo the dignified and correct ritual of Krinaytsyu, willing himself to death, but instead he feels a compulsion to stay alive. The fact that he does not know why this is disturbs others as much as it does Saynyu.



SAYNYU, ORPHANED DROYNE SPORT

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	Male	—

TRAITS	Close Combat Aversion, Droyne Claws, Wings (large)

STR	4	**INT**	8	**SKILLS**
DEX	10	**EDU**	10	Advocate 0, Ancients Tech 1, Appeal 3, Art (Droyne) 1, Caste (Sport) 3, Deception 1, Diplomat 2, Engineer (j-drive) 1, Flight 0, Gun Combat 0, Outsider (humans) 1, Pilot (Starship) 1, Recon 1, Streetwise 1, Telepathy 1
END	5	**PSI**	9	

WEAPONS	Weird Beam Gun Thing (4D)
ARMOUR	Regalia (+2) with built-in Forcefield (+4)

Saynyu has been outside the Oytrip on several occasions and has some skills that will allow him to interact with outsiders in a meaningful fashion. Some of these are ‘black’ skills and it is this history of interaction with individualistic outsiders that has enabled him to resist the urge to give up on living. The same skills make him suspect as far as the Oytrip is concerned. All this has created a problem for both Saynyu and the Oytrip, which can be solved by sending him as a liaison to the Travellers. If they will have him, Saynyu will accompany the Travellers and do his best to assist them. His skills are broad rather than deep, other than those specific to functioning as a Sport in an Oytrip. He will try to be useful despite being out of his element.

Saynyu is a very lost individual, trying to find a place in the cosmos. His instinct is to try to find or form a Kroyloss, which will function as a surrogate family or mini-Oytrip for the time being. That might be the Travellers but if they do not treat him well he may one day decide it is time to die or else leave at the first opportunity. In this, Saynyu could be a truly tragic character, found dead in his quarters one day for reasons the Travellers never really come to understand. Alternatively, his death might make them realise how much he needed them – but too late.

If he is treated decently, Saynyu will be a loyal follower, although he may be confused by the lack of a rigid task delineation and hierarchy among the Travellers. They might even try to help him truly become an individual, a risky social experiment that could have all manner of outcomes. In theory, Saynyu could develop into an independent person who happens to be physically a Droyne. This is a denial of the very nature of ‘Droyne-ness’ which is dependent on being part of a community of mixed castes. It is unclear how other Droyne would react to him in this case. If they see him as a ‘Droyne gone wrong’ their reaction will be negative but ‘not a Droyne any more’ is also an option. Previous to Saynyu, the last Droyne to truly become individuals were the Ancients.

Saynyu has been gifted with some items that might help him. He has a modified set of regalia suitable for a Sport on a long-term diplomatic mission. It includes a protective forcefield that provides armour against kinetic but not energy weapon attacks and also creates a gas retention field that allows Saynyu to function as if he was wearing a vacc suit for a few minutes. He is armed with some kind of hand-held, telepathically triggered beam weapon of Ancients origin.

ACROSS THE MARCHES

The Travellers now know that some individuals were removed from the genetic cache on Andor just a few days before the attack took place. The words ‘Omicron’ and ‘Gamma’ were associated with this endeavour, suggesting that Omicron Division was behind the operation and that the specimens were taken to Research Station Gamma. This fits with what the Travellers learned in *Mysteries of the Ancients* – Omicron Division is very interested in the Droyne and suspects that the Ancients were Droyne.

This raises a number of questions: did Omicron Division know an attack on Andor was imminent? Were its agents followed or tracked to Research Station Gamma? If this is the case the installation might be in danger. Whilst the Travellers may or may not care all that much about its safety, an Imperial research station may hold secrets they will find useful. In particular, they may be able to find out more about the uplift process they are currently experiencing and where it might lead. They could perhaps even learn how to control or extend it.

The Travellers will have found sufficient information on Andor to know they need to visit Research Station Gamma. However, Travellers being what they are, they might miss or forget the obvious. Railroading is not desirable and indeed the Travellers may generate their own adventures by deciding they need to do something before going to the research station. The transit to Vanejen, location of the installation, is an opportunity to do so but also a chance for the Travellers to become side-tracked or forget what they are doing. There are various ways to tackle this in a typical campaign but the Referee has an additional measure available after the Travellers have left Andor: visions. Even if they do not recall hearing about Omicron Division and its involvement at Andor, their subconscious will keep churning up the reference. This will eventually become a compulsion to visit Vanejen and seek some answers.

The transit from Andor to Vanejen is over 30 parsecs, during which time the Travellers have the chance to get involved in other adventures or run into complications. If they leave Andor promptly they may be well ahead of the news it has been attacked and it is entirely possible that there is no reason for anyone to suppose the Travellers were ever there. If they dawdle, Imperial ships will be arriving as they leave but even so the news of what happened will ripple out more slowly than the Travellers can move – assuming they head directly for Vanejen at a reasonable speed. If the news gets ahead of them and they are known to have been present the Imperial authorities will want to talk to them. See ‘Official Entanglements’ on page 117 for details of how this might happen.

News of the attack at Andor will reach some of the surrounding naval bases about 10 days after the incident. This represents the first naval ship arriving, noting the carnage and urgently returning to base to make a report. Jump-6 couriers will immediately be despatched to all naval bases in the subsector. This means that all naval bases in the Five Sisters will be aware of the incident within 17 days or so. Given the sensitivity of Andor the incident will merit urgent updates to all naval bases in the sector, so news can be assumed to spread as fast as jump-6 couriers can carry it.

Initially this will be a minimal account as little data is available but once ships arrive to investigate a clearer picture of what happened will be built up. If the Travellers’ ship was spotted in the system during the attack or once investigators arrive, this will be known to intelligence and senior command personnel at naval bases as soon as couriers start to arrive. However, less information will be disseminated to officials at ordinary starports and a major effort will be made to contain news of the attack. The general public might never find out what happened, although leaks and rumours are inevitable.

Reports of an attack on Andor will be accompanied by a request for assistance and a generally increased state of alert. This is a standing-orders package which may not give a reason for the alert. Thus some naval ships will be more suspicious of everything in general without knowing what to look for. The situation is not uncommon and can be triggered by anything from an upsurge in pirate activity to major war breaking out on the far side of Imperial space.

World governments may or may not be informed, although the Imperial nobles who act as their liaison to the sector administration will be informed if the need is perceived. Major ports will get news by way of the x-boat network and navy couriers, or even redeployed warships. The situation is different for minor ports, whose officials might not be informed at all. The Imperium must balance information control against the possible benefits of some backwater port official spotting something unusual and will for the most part choose to rely on standing procedures rather than risking a panic or information leak. Naval vessels on deployment will learn about the situation when a courier or auxiliary reaches them. The Referee can assume that information spreads out from bases at the rate of one jump per week. This means any major naval force or capital ship within six parsecs of a base gets news by courier seven to eight days after the base does. Minor patrol ships may be informed by an auxiliary or briefed when they return to base.

Exactly what information is available in any given place is up to the Referee. Alerts and requests to detain people for questioning or report the movements of certain vessels will go to installation commanders and their intelligence staff, and may have to be disseminated to lower levels of the chain of command. A port authority security lieutenant will probably not know why the Travellers are 'of interest' but will obey instructions to detain them. Many of those involved will not get the full story at any point; information of this sort is very much need-to-know. Thus the Travellers may go to one port where they are subjected to intense questioning, then another where they arouse only mild interest or none at all.

The navy will keep a lid on the situation for as long as possible but rumours will leak. Some important figures will also be informed 'unofficially' by way of back channels. This means that if the Travellers use backwater ports and stay off the main communications arteries they can stay ahead of the general news and alerts, which for the most part are moving by way of routine information dissemination. This can be assumed to be two parsecs per week for Class A and B starports. Class C starports will typically be two weeks behind this curve, with Class D starports up to 2D weeks behind. Class E starports might not receive an update for months. News of the attack on Andor does not begin to propagate at all for at least two weeks after the attack.

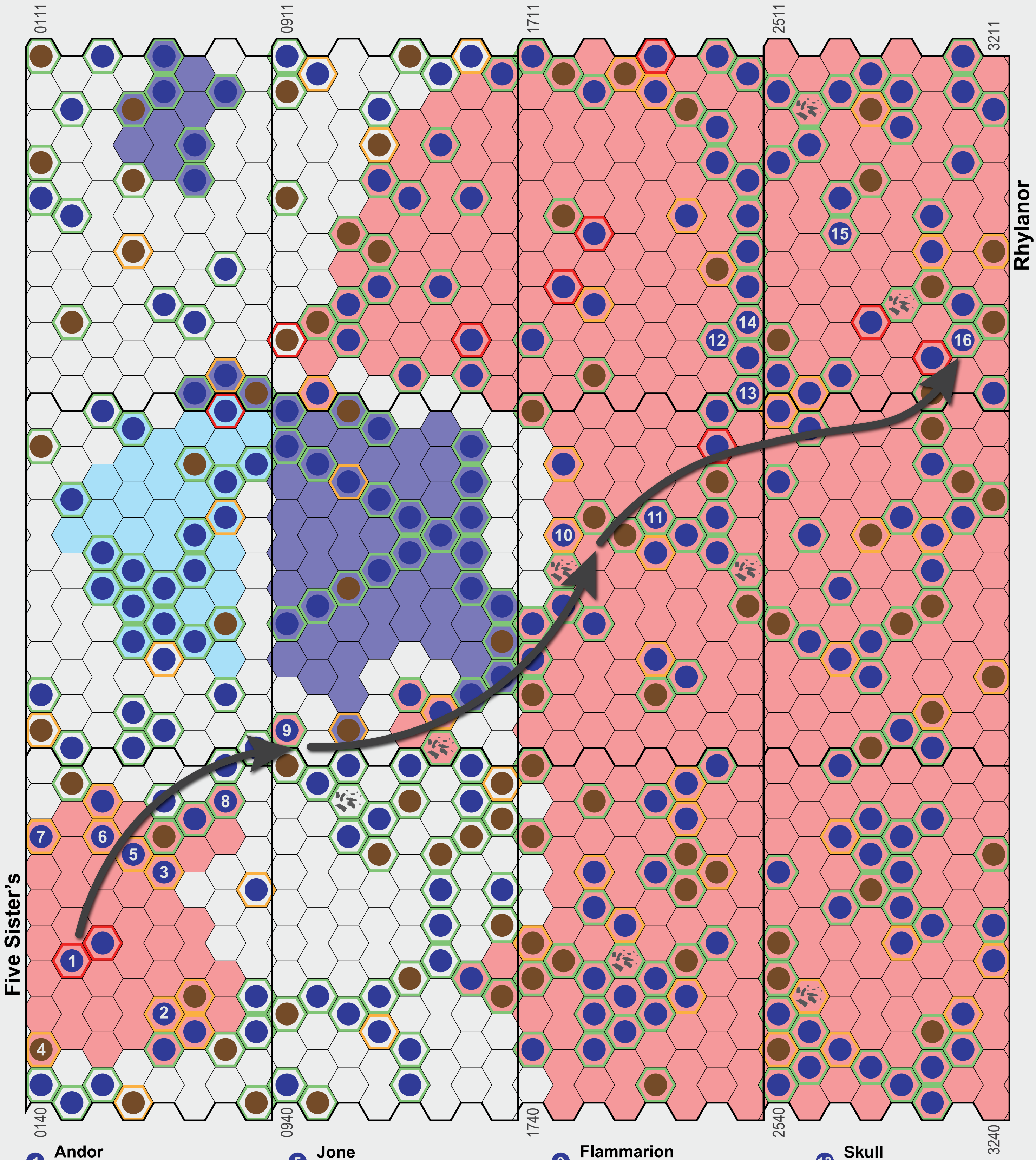
For example, the Travellers rather cheekily pass through the naval base at Wonstar, three parsecs from Andor, on their way to Vanejen. They left the day after the attack, at which point the massacre of the blockade flotilla had not been discovered. There is no chance a vessel will have arrived with the news before them, so whilst their ship might attract some attention there is no state of heightened alert. The Travellers will face only routine scrutiny.

The Travellers do not go directly to Vanejen but instead wander around for a while seeking information. After a rather interesting but entirely irrelevant side trip to Darrian space, the Traveller eventually make port at Loneseda in the Rhylanor subsector. This is about 28 parsecs from Andor, with a Class C starport. There are Class A and B starports nearby at Fosey and Heroni, and a naval base at Skull. Some 20 weeks have passed since the Travellers witnessed the attack at Andor.

The naval base at Skull will have received word of an attack on Andor about six weeks after it occurred and has passed the information to those deemed to have a need to know. This will not include the commanding officers of corvettes patrolling Loneseda but there has been plenty of time for a general alert to reach them. The Referee concludes that if the Travellers' ship had been clearly identified at Andor, the patrol corvette they encounter at Loneseda would be looking for them… but it was not. Instead the corvette's crew are on the lookout for anything out of the ordinary and may be more than usually scrupulous in their investigation of the Travellers' ship but they are not specifically being sought.

As for knowledge of the attack outside official circles, the Referee has decided that rumours started surfacing six weeks after the attack. Using the previous rules of thumb, the Referee decides that the rumours will have reached the general vicinity of Loneseda about 14 weeks after they started, plus two weeks because the Class C starport receives less traffic. The schedule for rumour arrival is thus 6+14+2 = 22 weeks, and the Travellers are 20 weeks out from the incident. If they hang around long enough they can witness the explosion of rumours and wild claims that run around the port when the first free trader arrives with news of 'some big navy flap at Andor or somewhere'. For now, however, there is no sign that anything unusual is happening.

ANDOR TO VANEJEN


0111
0911
1711
2511
3211
Rhylanor
15
14
12
16
13
10
11
9
8
7
6
5
3
1
2
4
Five Sister's
0140
0940
1740
2540
3240

① **Andor** C695735–9

② **Wonstar** B555741–7 (1 week)

③ **Karin** A767768–C (1 week)

④ **Raweh** B430400–B (2 weeks)

⑤ **Jone** B792785–9 (2 weeks)

⑥ **Mirriam** B9998A6–A (2 weeks)

⑦ **Emape** B564500–B (2 weeks)

⑧ **Iderati** A887798–C (2 weeks)

⑨ **Flammarion** A623514–B (2 weeks)

⑩ **Adabicci** A67189B–B (5 weeks)

⑪ **Lunion** A995984–D (5 weeks)

⑫ **Ivendo** B424659–A (6 weeks)

⑬ **Skull** C4237C7–9 (6 weeks)

⑭ **Icetina** B5245A9–7 (7 weeks)

⑮ **Rhylanor** A434934–F (7 weeks)

⑯ **Vanejen** C686854–5

🟥 Third Imperium 🟦 Darrian Confederation 🟪 Sword Worlds Confederation

● Planet (water present) ● Planet (dry)

FIVE SISTERS

The situation in the Five Sisters subsector has already been described, starting on page 62.

DISTRICT 268

Most of District 268 lies outside the Imperium. It is an area of interest where navy ships can be encountered but Imperial forces have jurisdiction only in two star systems or by local treaties. Entanglements with the navy are unlikely.

LUNION

The Lunion subsector is a frontier, lying just within Imperial borders. Navy vessels encountered here will be more suspicious than usual even if an alert has not yet reached them. All starports are Imperial territory, so Imperial officials have the power to detain or demand an explanation of their unusual ship if the Travellers attract their interest.

MORA

Mora is viewed by its leaders as the de facto capital of the Spinward Marches and also as a 'heartland' territory. Local officials and naval officers tend to be more pompous than elsewhere and challenges to Imperial authority are often taken as a personal affront. State of alert is average for an internal subsector except close to the subsector capital at Mora.

RHYLANOR

Another 'internal' territory, Rhylanor is generally viewed as secure except for the distant threat of renewed war with the Zhodani Consulate. The part of the subsector the Travellers are headed for is a backwater where interference is less likely than in other regions the Travellers will pass through.

SIDE TRIPS AND OTHER INCIDENTS

Almost anything can happen on the way to Vanejen, Travellers being what they are. The Referee should not railroad them to their destination but can provide reminders if they have apparently forgotten what they were doing. If the Travellers decide to take their time, events in the wider cosmos will proceed without them. As already noted, the Imperial authorities will be notified about the attack on Andor and whilst most officials will not realise how significant this is, there are standing orders in place for such an event. The Travellers may witness some of this unfolding.

Andor is a high-security area so any response must be balanced against the security nightmare caused by hordes of Colonial Fleet corvettes descending on the system. Besides, there is little point in rushing weak forces into the system piecemeal. The response will be made in stages, some of which take place before sector command have even learned of the attack.

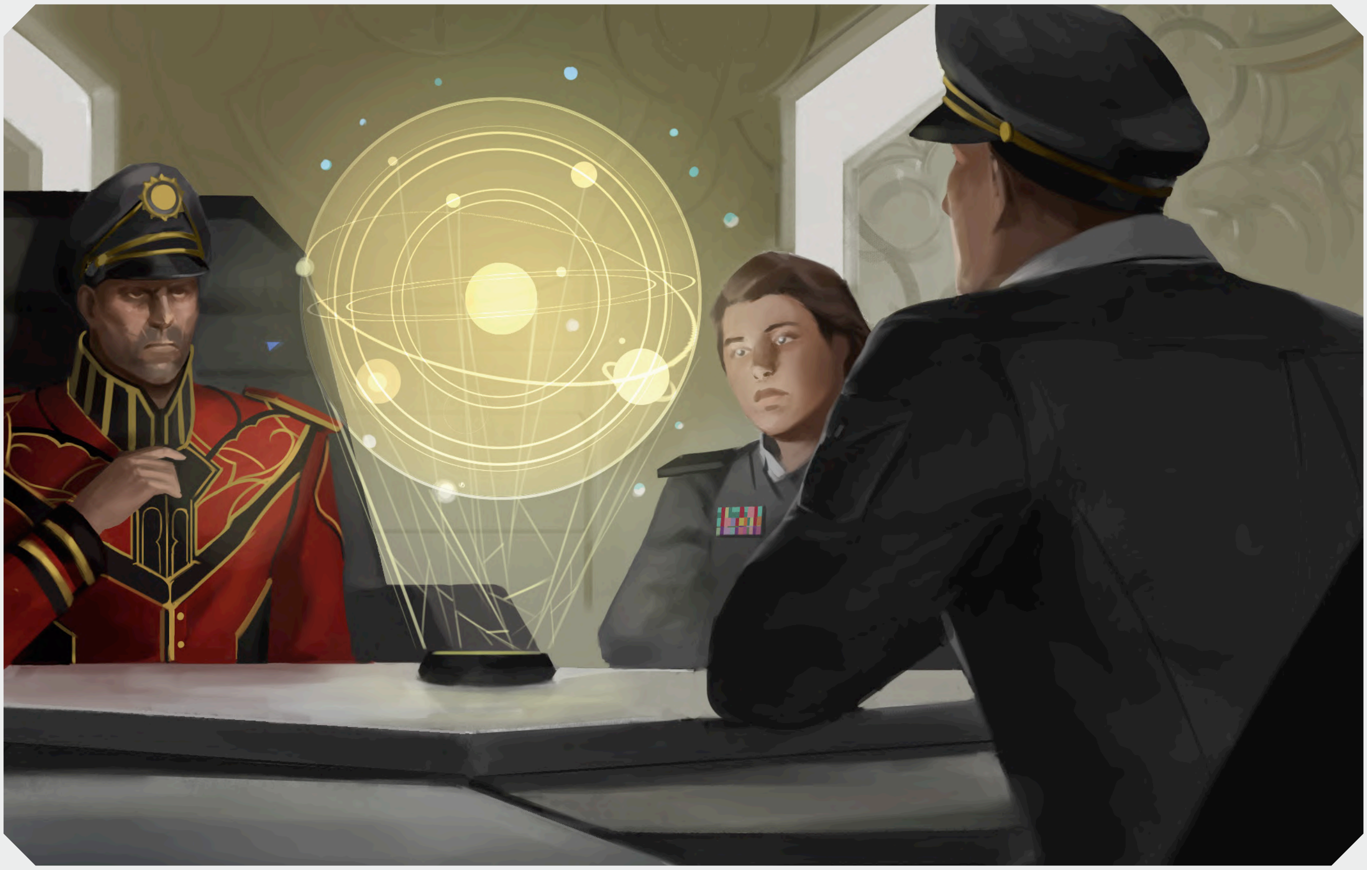
RECONNAISSANCE AND RESCUE

The first priority is to obtain solid information and rescue as many personnel as possible. If ships can be salvaged they will be but lives are more important. This is in part because the navy looks after its own – it has to, in order to maintain trust and morale levels – and also because large numbers of highly trained crew represent an investment to rival a major warship building programme.

This phase is characterised by a rush of available vessels from surrounding naval bases and the larger installation at Iderati. Most vessels are destroyers, with orders to conduct a cautious reconnaissance and protect later arrivals. These are followed by whatever vessels are available, organised into small task forces which arrive separately to avoid mass annihilation in the evert of a major threat. The vessels available will mostly be destroyers, with a handful of light cruisers and carriers are task force command ships. Auxiliaries and support vessels are intended to retrieve survivors and convey them to nearby bases but it is soon apparent that there are very few survivors.

RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PRESENCE

The small task forces assigned to the Andor system will gradually be realigned into a more centralised force, although it lacks the potency of the previous one. Given that force was annihilated, the previous close blockade is not re-implemented at once. Instead the Imperial Navy keeps its distance from Andor itself, sending destroyers to conduct patrols close to the mainworld whilst more valuable ships standoff. The Oytrip of Andor ignores offers of assistance and requests for information, and the Imperial investigation into what happened to the task



force produces no useful answers. During this period the regional commander requests additional forces. Elements of the sector fleet begin moving to an assembly point at Iderati naval base.

SURGE

Beginning about three months after the attack on Andor, elements of the Spinward Marches sector fleet arrive in force. This will include two squadrons of battleships or dreadnoughts plus carrier support, backed up by three or four squadrons of cruisers and a large destroyer contingent. This force stands ready but nothing happens and gradually matters begin to return to normal. About three months after the fleet arrived, it quietly departs to its peacetime bases. Left behind is a renewed blockade fleet with a couple of older battleships and several cruisers.

NORMALITY

In six to nine months the situation has more or less returned to normal. Cynical observers may note that the ships now deployed to the system are older and a little more expendable and it is possible that a movement of reserves takes place to create a response force at Iderati. Overall, however, the navy cannot justify a large deployment to Andor and must turn its attention elsewhere. Investigations remain open in perpetuity but there is little chance of the Imperial authorities learning much about what happened. Omicron Division has a clearer picture but is not inclined to share it.

The Travellers may encounter ships being transferred to the Five Sisters, or consequences resulting from the move. Cancelled leaves and training courses send ripples through the navy and politicians protest the redeployment of capital ships out of their area of interest. At the same time, rumours about the reason for the redeployment are rife. Ambassadors from the Sword Worlds condemn 'blatant Imperial build-up' on their borders whilst the usual doom-merchants proclaim an imminent Frontier War. The Referee can build in little details to the Travellers' progress through various systems, providing an insight into how the mainstream media and general public respond to great events they know little about.

OFFICIAL ENTANGLEMENTS

The Travellers' presence at Andor and their subsequent 'visit' to Research Station Gamma, will put them on the radar of the sector authorities. Exactly how this happens can vary. At the very least, the crew of any vessel known to be at Andor during or after the attack will be wanted for questioning. A group who also trashed an Imperial research station – or who are suspected of having done so – will also become persons of interest. There are two levels to this. The majority of people involved in this matter have no idea about the deeper implications and are simply doing their jobs. They have been told to detain the Travellers for questioning and will try. A few officials and anyone from Omicron Division will know more and may face a difficult decision about whether to inform their colleagues of how dangerous the situation could be or to maintain operational security.

The Travellers are by now powerful enough to get away with refusing to be detained, at least initially. They may well be able to disintegrate a mere patrol corvette or close escort, or bull their way through a starport security force. However, doing this sets in motion a chain of events that will lead to ever-greater resources being sent against the Travellers. They may end up fighting the Imperium as well as their Ancient foe.

How 'interesting' the Travellers are can be tracked by use of an index value. Whether this translates to enmity depends on what actions they have taken and whether the authorities know about them. The Interest Index (II) can be reduced by various means but on the whole is more likely to increase over time. It defaults to zero if news of the attack on Andor has not reached the Travellers' location, although turning up at a port in an obviously very exotic ship will generate interest even if involvement with wider events is not suspected.

If the Travellers are particularly blatant their Interest Index can go very high, virtually guaranteeing they are flagged as persons of interest in every system they visit. That could become tiresome, as every patrol ship they encounter wants to board their vessel and ask the same questions. Possible solutions range from just flying away or even blasting the pesky corvette to wearily trotting out the same answers to the same questions. Alternatively the Travellers might start moving covertly, avoiding the main spacelanes and bypassing the patrols. In this they are following in the footsteps of beings like Seven and even Yaskoydray, operating beyond the realm of petty 'normals' and forced to hide in the shadows in case the 'normals' push a confrontation to the point where the situation has inconvenient consequences.

The response of a portside official or patrol ship commander is determined by rolling 2D and adding the Travellers' II. Their response is indicated on the Level of Interest table. Note that a requirement to question or stop and search a ship does not translate to hostility; the Travellers may well be able to answer a few questions and be on their way. However, resisting or fleeing will result in enmity. If a navy ship is fired upon the authorities will take a much greater interest and may be more robust in their dealings with all suspect vessels. If they are sure the Travellers are responsible there will be an escalating response. This starts with a few additional patrol ships in the area and has no upper limit. The Travellers may end up with flotillas of destroyers hunting them, or cruisers, or even major task forces if the threat seems to merit it.

The response will be proportionate to what the authorities think they are dealing with. A missing corvette will most likely be assumed to be victim to a well-armed pirate vessel if foul play is suspected at all. If the hulk of a destroyer is found, the assumption is a powerful raider of perhaps cruiser size. If the Travellers are killing cruisers they can expect the sector fleet to make hunting them a priority.

How the Travellers deal with this level of interest is up to them. It would be easiest to avoid notice altogether but the Travellers might use conventional means – ranging from quoting their rights chapter and verse, to bribing or blackmailing officials – or find a way to make use of their more exotic capabilities. Telepathic suggestion would be highly effective against ordinary

personnel and officials as they are unlikely to have any protection. Meeting the boarding party at the airlock and telepathically informing the commander that they searched and found nothing will get rid of that party but arouse suspicions elsewhere.

More subtle Travellers can do far better, perhaps using the questioning as a chance to obtain information rather than give it, or to get false data into the system. This does not require telepathy – old-fashioned lies and manipulation may also work. By such means the Travellers may be able to reduce the level of interest they have generated – if a suitably high ranking officer or official circulates a report to the effect that someone else is to be sought or the Travellers are actually working for the authorities, this may muddy the waters for some time and reduce the amount of intrusive questions the Travellers face.

Interest does not translate to hostility or even suspicion as such. The authorities are worried and puzzled, and want information. They will cast the net wide and collate everything they learn before making a definitive response. Given the time lag inherent in gathering and moving information it may be some time before a clear picture is built up of what has happened. However, local officials may act on whatever information they have and might not always make the wisest choices. If the Travellers are found or strongly suspected to have access to Ancients technology, an attempt to claim it for Imperial use is likely. This could lead to hostility and an unfortunate incident in which the Travellers have to protect their property.

If the Travellers think ahead and consider the consequences of their actions – and the likely intentions of the Imperial authorities – they can avoid a lot of problems and keep doors open for later. On the other hand, if they do not think about what they are doing or choose to disregard the problem they will attract ever more attention. That might not be an issue at first but once the line from ‘potential threat’ to ‘known powerful hostile’ is crossed, their lives will become increasingly difficult.

Interest Index

Factor	Interest Index	Notes
News of the attack on Andor has reached this location	+2	This indicates a general increase in alertness, translating to a suspicion of 'unusual' groups and individuals.
The Travellers have been identified as associated with Andor during or after the attack	+8	The Droyne of Andor will not say anything to the Imperials, so this is likely to occur only if the Travellers' ship is observed by vessels responding to news of the attack.
The Travellers are known to have visited Research Station Gamma	+4	This will become apparent sooner or later once the incident at the research station is investigated. However, if the Travellers move away from the area promptly they may stay ahead of a routine notification.
The Travellers are using an obviously exotic ship	+2	Humans crewing a ship presumed to be of Droyne origin would fit this category. If Ancients technology is positively identified the effect on II is +8 rather than +2.

Level of Interest

2D + II	Result
4	The Travellers are likely to be ignored even if they are behaving in a slightly suspicious manner. Officials here have more urgent matters to attend to.
5–8	The Travellers will be noted for local observation but unless they do something to pique deeper interest they will not be questioned or impeded. Information will be filed but not shared unless specifically requested. This is unlikely unless the Travellers make trouble elsewhere or someone from Omicron Division starts making detailed enquiries.
9–12	The Travellers will be observed and asked routine questions if the opportunity arises – for example as they pass through starport customs. Data will be routinely shared with other agencies or the authorities in other systems, creating an additional DM equal to 1D on the next check to determine level of interest.
13–16	The Travellers will be detained and questioned, although this is unlikely to go beyond the routine. For example, they may be boarded by a patrol ship and asked about their cargo and destinations, just like any other ship. If interest is piqued by something the Travellers have, do or say the situation may be escalated.
17–20	The Travellers will be detained, using force if necessary, and rigorously questioned. It is probable that they are not suspected of anything specific but are subject to a 'fishing expedition' on the part of the authorities or an investigation carried out just in case they have something to do with something that happened elsewhere. Thus the authorities might ask about Andor without really suspecting the Travellers were there.
21–24	The Travellers will be detained, using force if necessary, and rigorously questioned. They will be held for as long as the authorities can get away with and all legal searches will be carried out. If the authorities can manoeuvre the Travellers into agreeing to a deeper search of their ship or further investigation the authorities will make the most of this.
25+	The Travellers will be detained by force if necessary and held until 'the appropriate authority' can send someone to deal with them. This will ostensibly be Naval Intelligence but is probably an Omicron Division operative.

VANEJEN

Vanejen lies on the Spinward Main and might be expected to receive a fair amount of interstellar traffic as a result. However, there are only a handful of star systems beyond and their economies are not sufficient to make a jump-1 trade loop attractive. This, and the Red Zone at 457–973, has ensured that jump-1 traffic on this part of the Main tends to be directed elsewhere. Indeed, the whole area is something of a backwater. The Mora subsector administration is more concerned with affairs closer to the subsector capital and attention from Rhylanor has always been directed to spinward-coreward. As a result Vanejen and the surrounding systems are very much a backwater; a place for jump-2 ships to pass through on the way to somewhere more important.

The Vanejen system is a binary. Its primary is a bright G1 (yellow) main sequence star named Vitus which is orbited by all significant bodies. The M0 distant companion Gikuk has no terrestrial bodies orbiting it but does possess two rather unimpressive planetoid belts. Besides Vanejen itself there are six terrestrial planets. The system has no gas giants.

Vanejen itself is officially designated a ‘garden’ world, although it is rather chilly by normal standards. It is also quite small, with surface gravity close to 0.75G. There are four continents, of which three straddle the equator. The fourth is located in the high northern latitudes. It is largely barren, with no significant mineral wealth to attract investment or settlement. Human habitation is scattered across the three more hospitable continents, with perhaps 450 million inhabitants. The world also has a significant Chirper population, estimated to be around 50 million. There are enclaves on all continents but only those on the three human-inhabited ones are documented – and then very poorly. It may be that the Chirper population has been mis-estimated by a large margin.

Vanejen was colonised by Vilani settlers around 3,500 years ago and developed – if that is the right word – in isolation for much of that time. The colony gradually regressed to a primitive state and lost many facets of traditional Vilani culture in the struggle to survive. When contacted by the expanding Third Imperium the population were at a stable TL2 and remained that way for some time. It has only been in the last century or so that advancement has commenced. Today, Vanejen has reached TL5 and is trying to progress, with some cities having access to early TL6 items.

Vanejen’s fortunes changed briefly during the Third Frontier War. Imperial reverses necessitated the creation of fortified bases behind the main combat area, and Vanejen was selected as a site for one of them. This decision was prompted by the lack of gas giants; intruders would have to use Vanejen’s extensive oceans to obtain fuel, which could be denied by forces operating from fortified bases on the world’s moons.

The result was a crash-building programme which brought little to the world itself. Groundside installations were set up mainly to facilitate the purchase of supplies and provide recreation facilities to the workforce, and later the naval personnel stationed at the fortresses. This resulted in some intermingling between the more or less pure-blooded Vilani population and a variety of offworlders, but for the most part the populace are still Vilani in terms of biology if not culture.

The need for bases in systems like Vanejen passed quickly and from 995 onwards the installations were gradually abandoned. Those on the moons were largely dismantled, although some equipment still remains. These installations are property of the Imperial Navy and off-limits to unauthorised personnel. It is not known what security measures are in place. The main groundside installation became a modest Class C starport.

The world government is based on traditional dominance of various sectors by the ‘Great Families’, who leverage control over manufacturing, commerce and energy production into political power. A global economy is gradually emerging but the world’s climate poses significant problems. Storms are common, making long-range air transport questionable until higher-tech aircraft or ideally grav vehicles become prevalent. Maritime transport is impeded by the same storms and also by pack ice and icebergs. In recent years submersibles have increasingly been seen as a solution.

In 1075, construction began on an Imperial research station, using land bought from some of the Great Families. This was controversial, as the island in the remote southern ocean chosen as its site was subject to disputed ownership. Tales persist of underhand dealings during the race to reach the island and stick a flag in its barren soil in order to garner Imperial Credits.

VANEJEN

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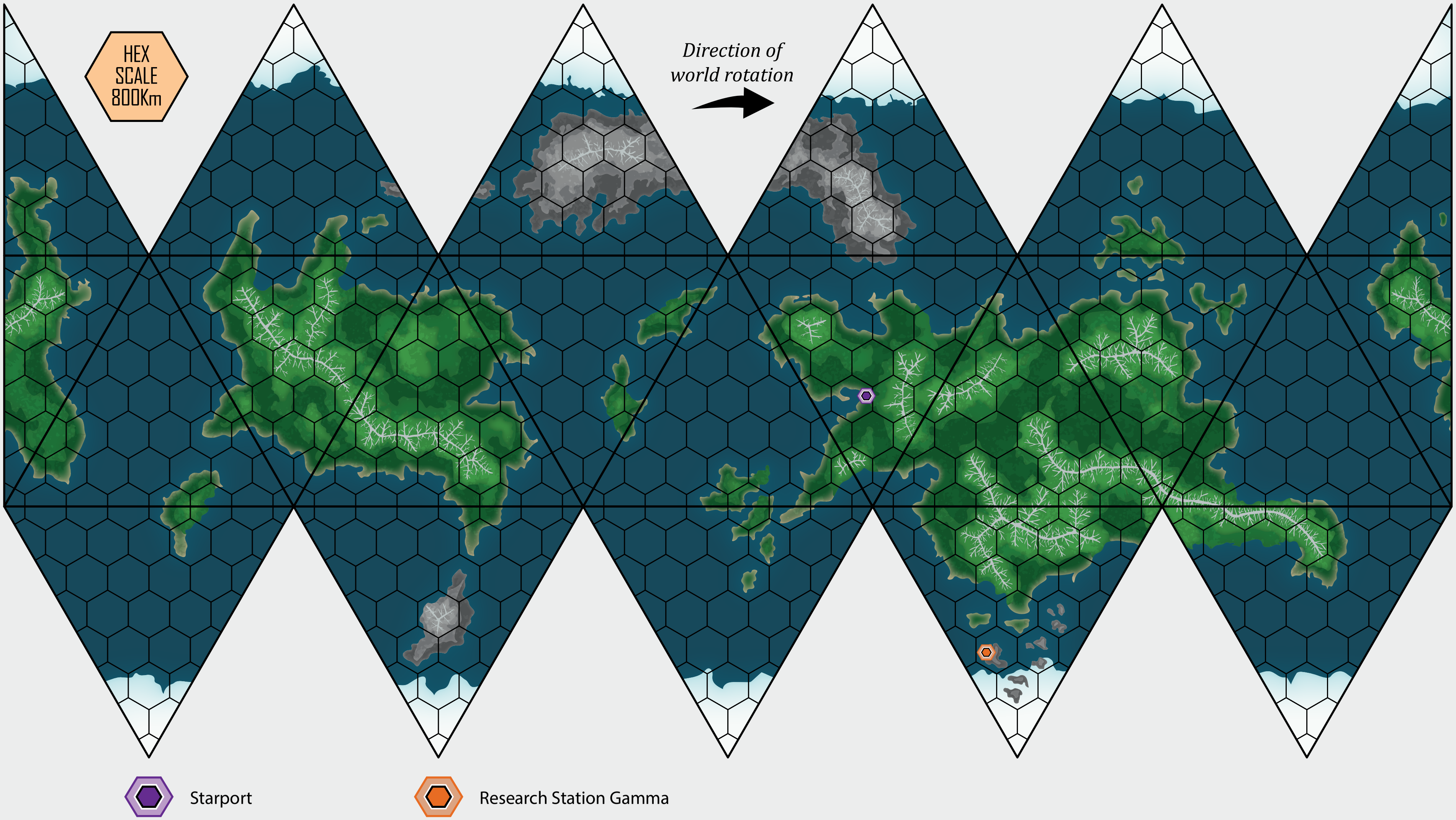
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SCALE
800Km
Direction of
world rotation
Starport
Research Station Gamma

RESEARCH STATION GAMMA

There are multiple installations designated Research Station Gamma within Imperial space, each defined by its sector location as well as its name. More properly known as Research Station, Spinward Marches Sector, Gamma, the installation is generally referred to as simply 'Gamma' in its own locality. It is noted on official starcharts but, like all such installations, there are dire warnings about the penalties for trespassing there.

Gamma was constructed beginning in 1075 and is very much a cutting-edge facility in terms of technology as well as construction. Its official purpose is research into creatures of the Marches with a view to developing new life-extending medical treatments. Since its creation there have been various exposés in the more questionable end of the news industry about what is 'really' happening at Gamma. These include lurid tales of infighting among the staff, hotly denied revelations about the installation's secondary purpose as an orgy palace for the sector's great nobility, claims of vivisection carried out on the indigenous Chirper population and an article that states that Gamma is now the sole source of anagathic (anti-aging) drugs used by the Imperial family. These articles are not backed up by evidence, of course.

The installation is known to have a landing area for spacecraft but requires special permission to visit. Although the installation's primary sponsor is the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service, the navy has taken over its security and granting of permission to visit – or rather, not granting permission. In the past decade almost all requests for access have been denied without a reason given. That is not in and of itself unusual but normally a research station will maintain links with local universities and academic institutions. All have been quietly severed in the past few years.

Gamma is run by Acting Director Sir Gnetus Jerrold Vicervis. No other personnel are specifically named in connection with the installation but a search of academic records shows a stream of papers emerging under the names of various individuals, some of whom can be traced to local universities or other projects. No papers have been published in the last three years and the number per year dwindled rapidly for the three years before that. Papers are, for the most part, extremely niche. They typically deal with the biology and habits of creatures found around the sector, and how these traits may be related to treatments for ailments connected with aging. The Travellers could spend weeks reading all these without finding anything useful.

The reality is that the installation originally had a significant staff of researchers, assistants and facilitators, including computer and robotics technicians. Vicervis was appointed Assistant Director when the installation opened. At first everything went well. Gamma produced meaningful research on its main areas of interest, including papers that advanced knowledge – albeit in a small and very niche way. The station returned its investment and was to all intents and purposes a successful mainstream research facility. At the same time, some of the staff conducted experiments regarding the supposed psionic capabilities of some creatures. This was covert but not unofficial – in other words it was part of the station's remit but that remit was never fully disclosed to the public.

When the director of the installation died, apparently of natural causes, Vicervis was placed in temporary charge. Whilst brilliant, he was never the most ethical or even stable of individuals and needed to be kept in check by a strong personality. Notes to this effect in his personnel file were overlooked, perhaps due to the consistently excellent work he produced, and his acting-directorship has continued to the present day. Omicron Division might also have had a hand in this decision, as Vicervis was willing to carry out projects for them that other scientists would have rejected.

Gradually, the emphasis of the installation and its projects shifted and the degree of ethical control plummeted. Personnel requested reassignment or were hounded out whether they wanted to go or not. Soon only a skeleton staff remained and those were either sycophants of Vicervis or cowed into submission by his incessant bullying. The station struggled to remain operational but additional personnel were difficult to find even if Vicervis was willing to accept them. The answer: Robots! Gamma already had some, so adding a few more was unlikely to be a problem. This allowed Research Station Gamma to run on a skeleton staff with minimal oversight and accountability. Everyone's purposes were suited and for a time everything seemed to be going well.

The reality was quite different. Vicervis did not merely go off the rails; he forgot they ever existed. He is now obsessed with finding 'the key' to unlocking psionic powers in those that do not have them and in particular creating a means of real time interstellar communication. He has assured his backers that he is close to doing so in order to secure his position and now he has to deliver. That part is proving to be a problem. At present he is fixating on the supposed psionic powers of the Chirpers, which he believes will somehow unlock the whole problem. He has engaged a party of low-end mercenaries to grab Chirpers from their villages and is conducting cruel experiments upon them. These are mainly psychological, with the intent of triggering their powers, but Vicervis is quite willing to hurt his subjects or even kill them to get what he wants. He has dissected a great many already, looking for some abnormality in the brain or anything that will give him a lead.

A few days ago, a high-speed cargo vessel that officially does not exist arrived at Gamma and delivered four specimens. These are Andorian Droyne, captured by a covert Omicron Division raid. Vicervis has been instructed to study them, which means something different to him than to his sponsors. They want to know what is so special about these particular Droyne and have not considered that Vicervis might have a different agenda. For his part, he is desperate to use them as the final component that will result in a breakthrough. The only reason he has not already started vivisecting is the fact that there are just four. His desperate obsession is – so far at least – tempered by knowledge that these are the only subjects he will ever have.

Research Station Gamma is built on an islet in the southern oceans. It is the westernmost of several, with shallow water to the east. To the west, the water is deeper which allows submersibles to approach the island and enter the underwater dock. The shallow waters around the islets are frozen for most of the year, sometimes all the way to the seabed, and there is usually pack ice atop the deeper waters. This breaks up and melts in the spring but in winter can extend several kilometres out to sea.

Conditions are generally windy, wet and cold. Arctic storms batter the island from time to time, making the use of grav vehicles hazardous. Even when a storm is not ongoing, conditions are gusty which can make starship landings and grav vehicle excursions a little more exciting than most people would prefer. The island has little vegetation other than low scrub and grass, and no significant animal life.

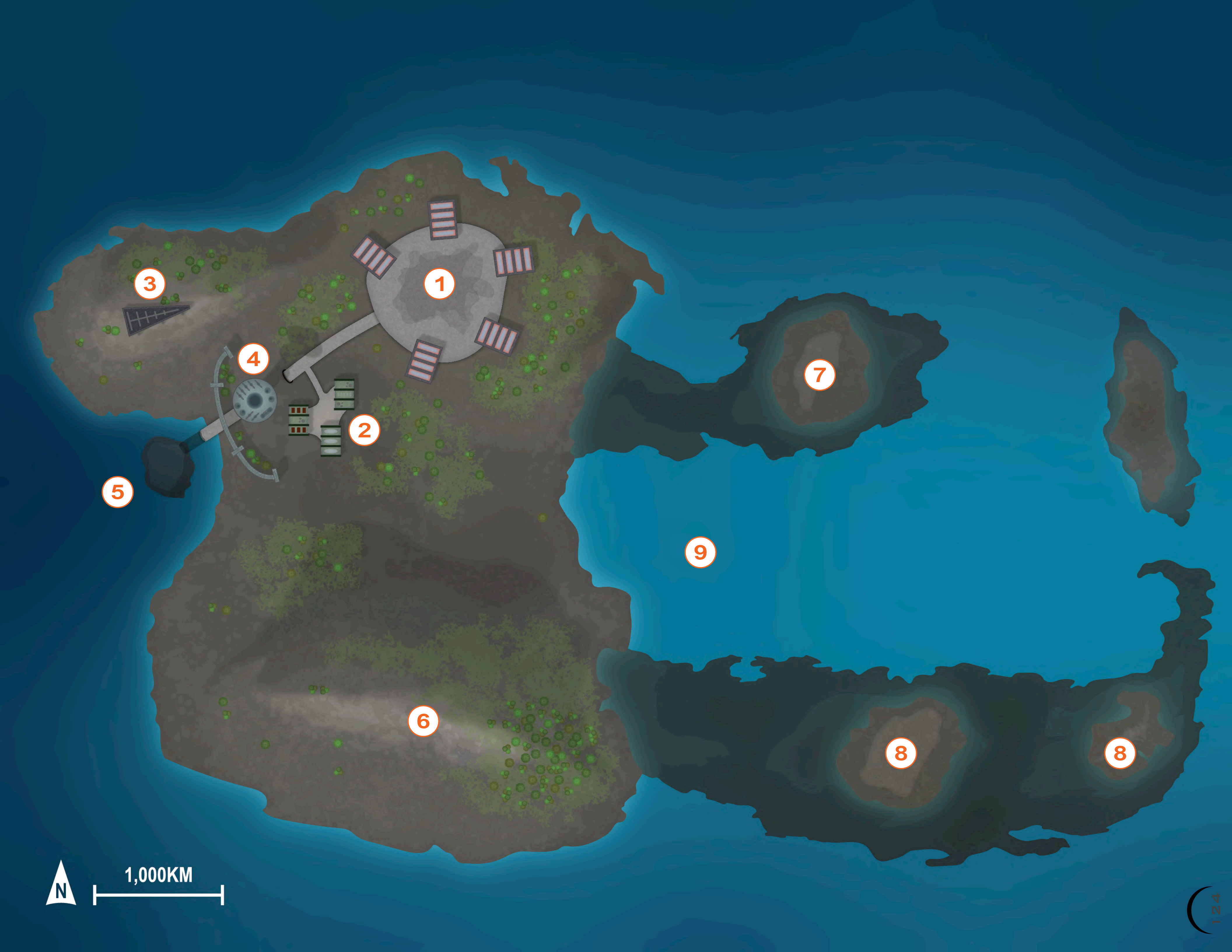
Motion and heat sensors are scattered over the whole surface of the islet, with smaller numbers on other parts of the mini-archipelago. These are used to detect intruders but could in theory be able to track escaped specimens. Data is automatically logged but, other than in the case of an alert, is rarely looked at. The network is for detection and tracking rather than observation. It can discern general characteristics of a subject and some data – such as likely species – can be inferred, but it is not possible to identify individuals.

LANDING AREA (1)

The installation's starship landing area lies a kilometre or so north-east. It consists of a roughly circular area of bedrock with a plasma-fused surface. There is sufficient space for a 1,000-ton ship to land without difficulty. Around the permitter are four hardened shelters which protect vessels during bad weather, plus a fifth structure which contains basic support equipment. A robotic service unit will connect power and fuel feeds to a ship but beyond that there are virtually no facilities. The landing area is covered by cameras and connected to the main installation by an underground tunnel. This contains an overhead monorail system suitable for transporting heavy or secure cargoes.

OUTBUILDINGS (2)

Close to the main installation are three outbuildings which clearly were never intended to be permanent, constructed in an unattractive, blocky manner from prefabricated sheets of commercially available material. As such they resemble the sort of structures flung up on a new colony to give people somewhere to live whilst proper facilities are constructed. The local weather has taken its toll and there are signs of half-hearted repairs over the years. All three have power and support connections from the main installation but none have been used for habitation. They have at times served as vehicle garages and storage facilities but for most of their history they have stood stand empty. Demolishing them would be more trouble than the director is willing to go to, so they are shored up whenever weather damage becomes too serious.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1,000KM

The outbuildings are used to house the installation's air/rafts, which are in use by mercenaries in sample gathering. They are not careful with the vehicles and the salty conditions are beginning to take their toll.

HILLTOP BUNKER (3)

Three starship-grade turrets are mounted on a triangular bunker hollowed into the rock of the hilltop. Two are armed with twin missile racks and a pulse laser. The missiles are for defence against spacecraft, with the turrets capable of switching to point defence mode to ward off missile attack or small craft that get close. The third turret mounts a single plasma gun, whose range is heavily attenuated in atmosphere. Nevertheless, it is capable of sweeping the landing area and about 10 kilometres beyond with radioactive plasma. The radiation and 'plasma splash' caused by firing this weapon would be hazardous to anyone on the islet but all significant structures – the main tower and the starship shelters – are hardened and would not be damaged.

There is a control centre in the bunker but it has never been used. A pair of maintenance robots endlessly check and service the bunker's stock of missiles as well as the loading and launching systems. They are supposed to receive maintenance of their own every few months but this has been neglected for years. Nevertheless, the robots and the systems they support are still in good working order.

The bunker also houses backup communications and tracking equipment and a weather monitoring suite as good as the one at the main installation. It is routinely in service to cross-check and corroborate the main system and holds complete records of weather conditions since the installation was constructed. Since weather can be important to spacecraft landing and launching operations, conditions during each arrival and departure are flagged for reference. This means there is a record of a ship coming or going even if the ship's presence has been deleted from the main logs. No data on the ship is held but the logs provide proof that one was present.

MAIN INSTALLATION (4)

The main installation takes the form of a wide cylindrical tower rising up from a larger circular base. A second wide circular area tops the tower, with antennae and sensor masts protruding above it. Spherical protrusions ring the tower between the two wider parts. Their function is not immediately apparent from the outside. The wind shear experienced by this construction is considerable but it is built of warship-grade materials and capable of resisting any wind that Vanejen can produce.

A windbreak in the form of a metal wall protects the installation from the worst of the arctic storms and incidentally protects unwary personnel from wandering too close to the clifftops. It was built a few years after the main installation, rather quickly and without much regard to aesthetics. Thus whilst the main tower is graceful and elegant, the wall is a set of ugly curved slabs of hullmetal supported by barbarically gargantuan ribs. It serves its purpose but cannot be described as anything other than an eyesore.

DEEPWATER BAY (5)

The western side of the islet is characterised by cliffs that rise 20–40 metres above sea level, with only a few areas lying low enough to allow access to the sea – if anyone wanted it. The far side of the islet is less rugged, with beaches of grey pebbles facing east. Deepwater Bay is exactly what the name suggests – an area of deep water running right up to the cliffs. North and south of it, the bottom shelves rapidly, averaging about 10 metres below the surface but in the centre of the bay is a channel some 120 metres deep.

This suited the purposes of the installation's builders, who envisaged a regular supply contract from the world's inhabited areas. A submarine dock was constructed, which not only allowed remote-controlled research craft to explore the nearby waters but which would permit local suppliers to deliver food and other necessities to the installation. As part of the research station's security setup, visiting researchers – for example from the universities of nearby worlds – would be required to land at Vanejen's main starport and travel by TL5 submersible to the island. This was intended to quietly deter visitors without attracting attention by openly refusing a permit. The measure worked well enough, although submarine visits are rare and the dock is mainly used for underwater research.

SOUTH RIDGE (6)

A long ridge stands atop the southern cliffs. It is unremarkable in most ways, other than having more scrubby bushes on the sheltered eastern side than anywhere else on the island. There are natural caves in the ridge, which have probably never been explored. These are significant as the only place on the island – outside the main installation – where an unprotected Traveller could survive a firing of the plasma gun on the northern ridge.

OFFSHORE ROCK N (7)

The imaginatively named Offshore Rock N protrudes a few metres above the surface at high tide. It marks the eastern end of an underwater ridge which connects to the shore. The water here is just two to three metres deep and freezes for much of the year.

OFFSHORE ROCK S (8)

Offshore Rocks S are the midpoint and eastern end of a second underwater ridge.

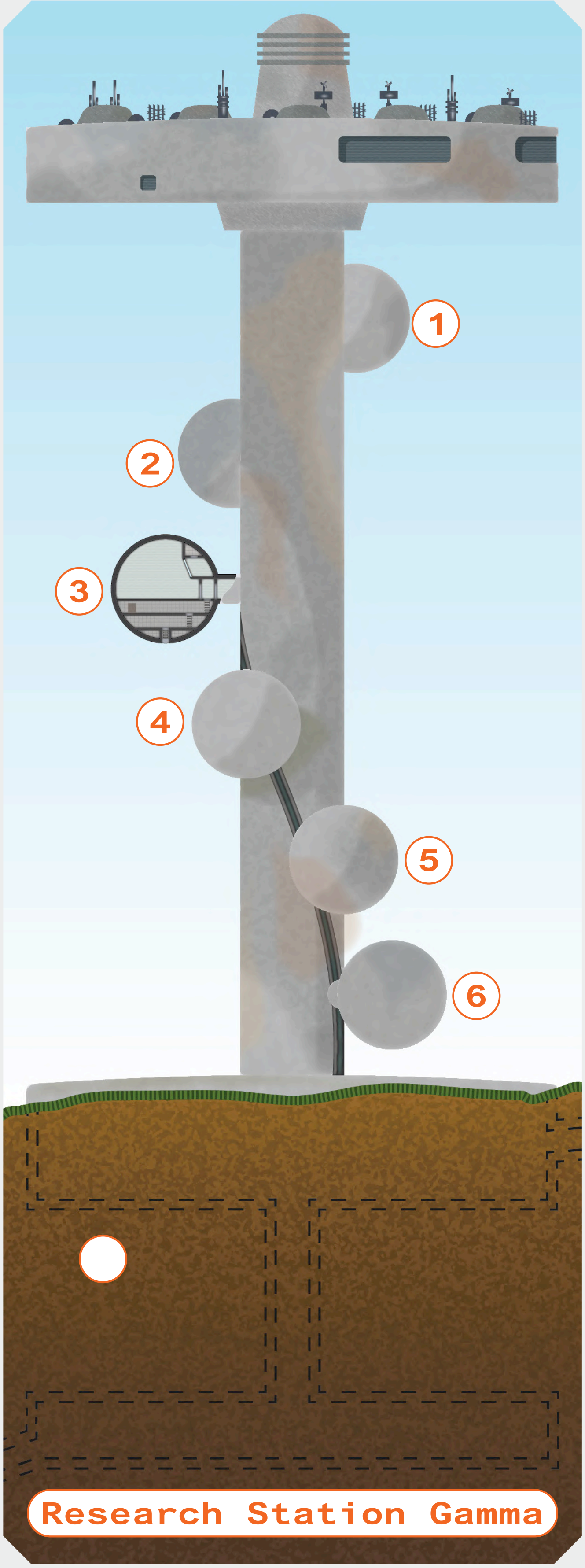
SHELTERED BASIN (9)

Between the offshore rocks and their associated ridges is an area of much deeper water. It is sheltered from the surrounding sea to some extent and remains unusually ice-free. This is partially due to a heater unit installed at the deepest point – about 50 metres down – which creates a thermal plume in the water that can be easily detected by a starship approaching the port. Several species of sea plants and animals have been installed in this artificial habitat as part of an experiment that was abandoned several years ago. The micro-ecosystem is no longer monitored, although occasionally samples are collected for routine analysis.

The research installation essentially consists of a vertical shaft with three broad discs radiating from it. The top one contains laboratory and working areas for the scientific staff whilst the ground-level disc houses personnel and handles newly arrived specimens. A lower level contains power and life support machinery and gives access to the underwater component of the facility.

Around the central shaft there are six containment spheres and there are three more underwater. Those on the shaft can be moved along a spiral track or around the shaft at whatever level they happen to be at. This allows the order of the spheres to be rearranged. Spheres are lowered into the ground-level disc to allow specimens to be moved in or out, after which they are lifted up the side of the shaft so occupants can be studied in isolation.

Access to the containment spheres is only possible at ground level or the midpoint of the shaft. In all other locations the spheres are completely isolated, making escape impossible. Spheres have a viewing chamber and containment area in the upper half and machinery in the lower part which permits the environment to be



Research Station Gamma

controlled. Stocks of food are also kept in the lower part of the chamber and replenished by lowering the sphere into the general containment area. Most interactions with creatures in the sphere is by way of a robot which is housed in the lower part of the sphere. Spheres not in use are subject to minimal security in the form of an access panel requiring an authorised person – usually any member of the station staff – to request opening. Those in use require authorisation from a senior member of staff.

CONTAINMENT SPHERE 1

The current uppermost containment sphere is empty. Its environmental controls have been set to 0.25G. This is less than half the surface gravity of Vanejen and is combined with a dense atmosphere. Such conditions are unlikely to occur naturally but do enable someone from a more standard environment to jump around in an extravagant manner or experiment with home-made wings. This sort of frivolity is frowned upon by the Acting Director but has provided the staff with recreation over the years.

CONTAINMENT SPHERE 2

This sphere contains fine red sand, which moves in what appears to be a constant wind. The environmental controls are set to mimic a small, low-G world with a very thin atmosphere. A casual observer will see no sign of life. However, the sphere does contain an experiment. Among the dust particles are microscopic creatures which appear to have some form of telekinetic capability. They operate instinctively rather than intelligently but there is some logic to what they do. By moving dust around the creatures pick up small particles of organic matter which are conveyed back for consumption. The creatures are more or less harmless but could be a nuisance if they got out, moving particles into places that are hard to clean or even jamming pieces of machinery.

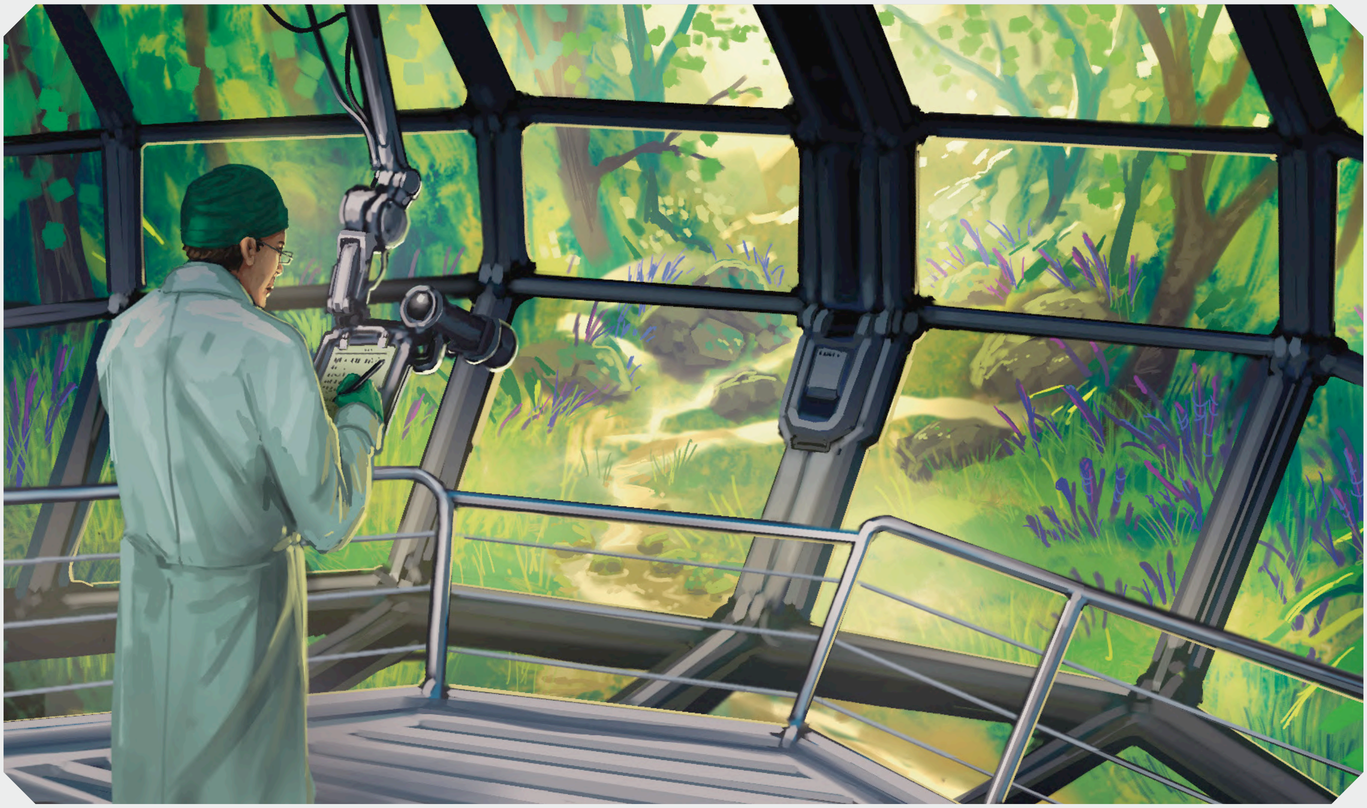
CONTAINMENT SPHERE 3

This sphere does not contain any creatures and has been set to duplicate a normal working environment in the research station. It is furnished with workbenches, apparently to turn it into an additional laboratory space. The reasons for this are not immediately apparent. The sphere is secured like all others but has an additional layer of authorisation which can only be provided by the Acting Director. There are three very similar devices set up on benches, each consisting of an annular base just over 20 centimetres thick and something that resembles a robotic arm but lacks a hand. Various objects, mostly simple tools such as spanners but also cups, plates, and random electronic spares, lie around on the benches but have no apparent use or connection with the devices. A metallic sphere lies on the bench next to one of the devices. It stands out by being constructed of the same silvery-grey material, whereas everything else is obviously from the research station.

These are teleportation-communication devices found by Omicron Division and brought to Gamma for study. Two are a linked pair. An object dropped above one will fall under gravity through the annulus and emerge from the other. If the robotic arm-like devices are not in operation the object will slow and stop, then drop back through. It will keep doing this until air resistance brings it to a stop – experiments with an evacuated sphere indicate that an object passing through the teleportation process is subject to conservation of momentum and other normal physical laws and will continue to oscillate for an indefinite period. The robotic arms use some kind of force field to hold and capture the object but will only work with the sphere.

Objects that do not fit completely in the teleportation field will not be affected, nor will objects connected to something outside the field. Trying to hold something or push it through, or to dangle it on a string, results in nothing happening whatsoever. Only an object completely in the field and not connected to anything in its current locality will be teleported.

These are interstellar communications devices of a sort Vicervis has been dreaming of. A message sphere dropped into the annulus of one device emerges from the other and is caught by a field projected by its arm. This field can also be used to set up the message, which is inscribed within the sphere upon its very atoms. Teleportation is only possible between two paired units but distance – so far as Vicervis has been able to determine – does not seem to matter. The third unit appears to be non-functional. There is no indication of where its partner is located.



CONTAINMENT SPHERE 4

The interior of this sphere resembles conditions on the northern continent of Vanejen. Several Chirpers are housed within. They are listless and appear unwell. These specimens have been in captivity for the longest of all Chirpers at Gamma and have been subjected to a variety of experiments. Some of their group have been killed or injured badly enough that they were taken away by the installation staff. Sometimes Chirpers are given medical treatment and returned to the group but most who become injured are never seen again.

These Chirpers are demoralised and worn down by living in a constant state of fear. They are frightened of humans and robots in particular but almost anything else will cause them to scatter and try to hide. The installation staff long ago learned how to bypass Chirper telepathic invisibility by artificial means such as shield helmets and the use of remote observation. The Chirpers do not know this of course but they are aware that their natural ability to remain unseen does not work in this terrifying place.

WEAKENED CHIRPERS

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Chirper		—		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	1	INT	1	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	0	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2
END	2	SOC	0	

CONTAINMENT SPHERE 5

This sphere contains a lone Chirper. It has been identified as possessing greater intelligence than its fellows and both a persistent nuisance and a source of fascinating data. Unfortunately, as its notes indicate, nothing has been learned about psionics from this individual. It has escaped several times, always due to errors made by handlers such as forgetting to secure the accessway from the main station. There is no indication the Chirper can operate doors or any sort of machinery. All but one of the escapes were contained within the station but on that single occasion the Chirper managed to get aboard a supply submarine which left before anyone realised.

This proved to be an unexpectedly beneficial circumstance as the Chirper managed to get back to its village on the main continent. A tracking device implanted under its skin allowed mercenaries from Gamma to find the village and capture multiple new specimens as well as recovering the escapee. The Chirper stayed on the loose for a while and attempted to solicit assistance from people at the port where it arrived. This attracted unwanted attention but – according to Vicervis' notes – was worth it overall.

This individual is named Chiree. He was part of a community of Chirpers living close to human settlements on the central continent. He is not any more intelligent than his fellows but he and others from his village are more experienced at observing humans and learning to use their tools. Chiree is in fact quite capable of operating simple devices and inputting access codes but has concealed this talent. He is planning another escape and intends to take his village-mates and any other Chirpers with him.

CHIREE

Chiree is semi-sentient, somewhere between a smart animal and a person of very low intellect. He understands Galanglic and can speak it a little, and is capable of abstract thought. This places him above the level of an animal which can learn from experience but not wonder about what lies beyond that experience. Chiree is capable of asking if-then questions and of passing information on to others. His reasoning is limited but he is capable of both common-sense inference and modest leaps of logic. For example, he has encountered artificial gravity and now knows that he will not always fall if he steps off a high place but has absolutely no idea why. He finds the concept unnatural and is frightened of such phenomena but willing to make use of them if he can.

CHIREE

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Chirper		Male		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	3	INT	2	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	0	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1
END	4	SOC	0	

CONTAINMENT SPHERE 6

Sphere 6 contains several Chirpers which appear to be in better health than the ones in Sphere 4. These are Chiree's village-mates and are familiar with human society. He was separated from them as a 'troublemaker' and they assume he is dead. Like Chiree, these Chirpers are not really any smarter but have seen and experienced more and developed a habit of using their intellect – such as it is – to a greater extent. There is probably a PhD in this for someone interested in researching the effects of observation on Chirper populations but all the Gamma staff want to do is test and torment them to see if their psionic powers manifest.

CHIRPERS

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Chirper		Male		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	3	INT	2	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	0	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Recon 2, Stealth 1, Survival 2
END	4	SOC	0	

UPPER SECTION

The base section is two decks in height. The ceiling of the upper is just below ground level. Above this is a roof layer some 4 metres thick. It is not entirely solid, comprising sections of construction material interspersed with trunking for power and control systems. The upper surface is gently curved to let rainwater runoff and heated to prevent icing. It can be accessed from the upper deck of the base section, allowing personnel to move around on the roof if necessary. This is rarely needed but there are cameras and antennae on the upper surface which occasionally require maintenance. The upper surface is about 1.8 metres above the surrounding land and not secured with measures to prevent someone from clambering up onto it and perhaps entering the installation through the maintenance hatches.

The main structural strength of the tower comes from its outer walls but these are not entirely solid. Instead, the tower is constructed as a circle of 36 cylindrical members, to whose outer surfaces are attached all necessary trunking and pipework. An inner and outer wall is supported by these, each of starship-grade crystaliron. The outer wall is equivalent to starship Armour 8; the inner wall is equivalent to Armour 3. 40 points of starship scale damage would be required to create a breach in the outer wall and 15 in the inner one. This would allow a human-sized person to climb into the between-walls spaces.

Actually collapsing the tower would require severing at least six of the main structural members, assuming these were adjacent. These can be considered to have Armour 10 – in addition to any provided by the outer sheathing of the tower – and require 50 points of damage to weaken them sufficiently that a collapse can occur if enough cylinders are breached. 100 points in the same place will sever a structural member completely. In theory, the tower can lose every third member and still maintain integrity, and might stay up with every other member completely severed.

The space between the walls is mostly empty, faced with a foamed polymer which acts as an excellent insulator, and every space can be filled with fire-suppressant gases in an emergency. This space is mostly forgotten about by the installation's staff but can be accessed by way of hatches in the ceiling. This requires moving through the roof layer's crawlspaces. There are also some 'structural spaces' in the tower's interior, constructed in the same way as the outer walls but are not armoured.

ENTRY AREA (1)

The monorail from the landing area enters the installation in this chamber. For non-staff this is the usual route in, enabling security checks to be carried out. There is a cargo handling crane here, although it is more commonly used to move specimen cages into the holding area on the southern side of the chamber. It is clear there have been modifications during the lifetime of the station, notably in terms of specimen containment. There are a few simple cage-type holding areas but most are capable of providing a variety of environments.

SECURITY OFFICE (2)

This area was originally set up as a security office capable of monitoring all camera and sensor systems throughout the islet archipelago. Its secondary function is to control access to the main installation. ID checks are supposedly carried out on all visitors but since the personnel complement has been drawn down this process is rather lax. It is standard procedure for a security robot to be on standby in this chamber.

SECURITY ANNEX (3)

The security annex serves as an armoury and general storage area for security-related equipment. This includes several flak jackets and helmets that have clearly never been used and sets of tough 'claw-proof' coveralls that definitely have. There is also a locked gun rack containing six shotguns, six revolver-type weapons and six each of long and short stun prods. Another stand holds four large security shields similar to those used by riot police. They are rather worn.

GENERAL CONTAINMENT AND HANDLING AREA (4)

The northern component of this level is given over to an area for the reception and initial analysis of specimens. It is a warren of clear polymer holding pens, aquatic tanks, cages and environmentally controlled areas. The area is very clean despite having been well used over the years. A storage area (4a) at the western end contains spare components for the containment equipment. A set of retractable shutters in the ceiling gives access to a shaft through which a containment sphere can be lowered into this area either to receive or release its occupants. Shutters in the floor cover a recess to allow the sphere to be entered at floor level.

SPECIAL CONTAINMENT AND HANDLING AREA (5)

About half of this chamber has been cleared and turned into a facsimile of Vanejen's wilderness but it is otherwise similar to the general containment and handling area. There are simple huts at the southern side, apparently constructed by stone age primitives. The walls have handholds and indentations suitable for climbing, with platforms on the walls and atop fake trees. The environment is suitable for Chirpers at present and has been used to study them in 'natural' conditions as well as to run rather cruel threat and response tests. The storage area (5a) contains a variety of materials used to create the environmental conditions in the main chamber.

ELEVATOR SHAFT AND POD (6)

Access throughout the installation is by way of a spherical elevator pod lifted up the central shaft by internal gravitic systems. The pod has one set of doors, rotating to face whichever way is deemed necessary. The elevator pod is designed to serve as a ‘lifeboat’ for the installation in a dire emergency. It can launch through a roof shaft in the lab level and make its way to a destination selected by a simple touch-screen interface.

SECURITY ROBOT DOCKS (7)

Each of these chambers has docks for three security robots, with a small maintenance bay in each chamber capable of holding a fourth. Most maintenance is automated but since the base staff was reduced oversight is patchy. This has led to the odd maintenance glitch which may have a knock-on effect in terms of effectiveness. This applies to all robots in the station but particularly on this floor where they operate most commonly.

HANDLING ROBOT DOCKS (8)

Each of these chambers has docks for three animal-handling robots. These are the most-used robots in the installation and are dinged and bashed to a considerable degree. One or more of the robots from this chamber may be deployed in the entry or handling areas, either conducting general survey-and-maintain tasks or simply standing around waiting for instructions.

SUPPORT ROBOT DOCKS (9)

Each of these chambers has docks for three general workbots. At any given time one may be in the maintenance berth and one or more might be busy somewhere on this level. Much of what these robots do is simple testing and inspection work, which involves slowly moving through an area running external diagnostics as a backup to the internal monitoring systems. Replacement of faulty or worn components is routine and generally handled without intervention or oversight from the base staff.

SPARE PARTS STORAGE (10)

These chambers contain spare parts for the level’s robots and also items for their use. There are racks of common spares, which are supposed to be replenished from bulk stores. In actuality these are running low as oversight of inventory is not a priority for the remaining staff.

LOWER SECTION

The lower half of the base section is given over to accommodation and general living spaces for the most part. The installation was originally built to house a large staff if necessary, along with visitors and any hangers-on they might have. Many of the cabins have never been used or have stood empty for years.

MAIN STAFF ACCOMMODATION (1)

This section of the deck contains starship-type cabins for the ordinary staff working at the installation, plus a galley and canteen area to serve their needs. Most cabins were cleared out when the occupants left or were transferred elsewhere but odd items might be found lying around here and there.

VISITOR ACCOMMODATION (2)

This area is almost identical to the main staff accommodation but has seen much less use. It was envisaged that the less important members of a visiting party, such as starship crew, would be accommodated in this area. Interaction with the base staff would thus be reduced, which was desirable as a general security measure.

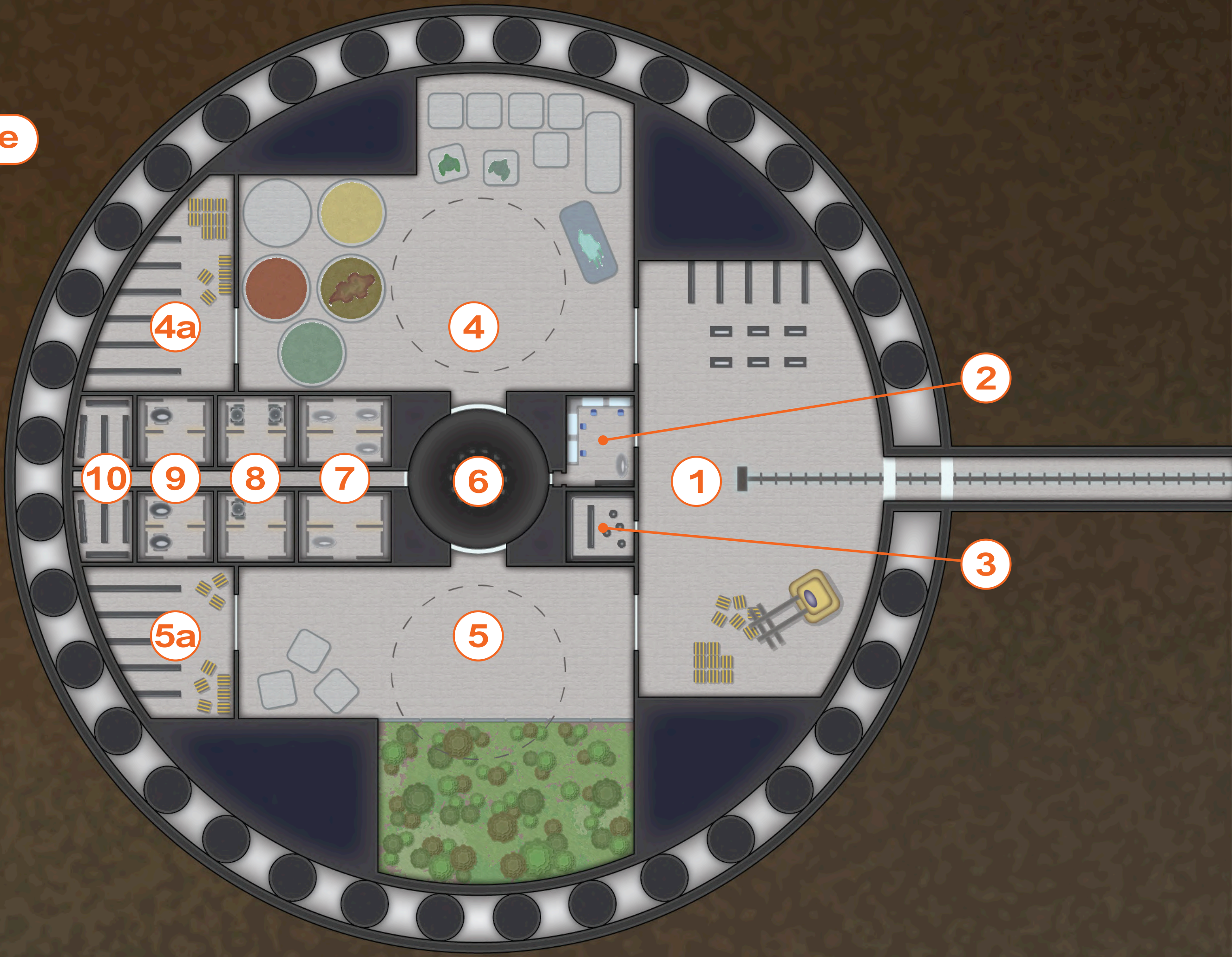
LUXURY VISITOR ACCOMMODATION (3)

This end of the visitor accommodation area contains larger cabins and a ‘VIP lounge’ where the more important members of a visiting party would be accommodated. It has been used only occasionally, although since Omicron Division became a regular client of the research station its representatives have come to expect the best cabins. A couple have even brought a few personal items and changed the décor to suit their taste and consider they own certain cabins.

SUPPORT AND STORAGE (4)

The two main accommodation areas are supported by a network of supply rooms and what amounts to an automated shop. Anyone with access to the installation can be parted from their Credits here, purchasing items from the installation’s ‘luxury goods’ stock.

Upper Base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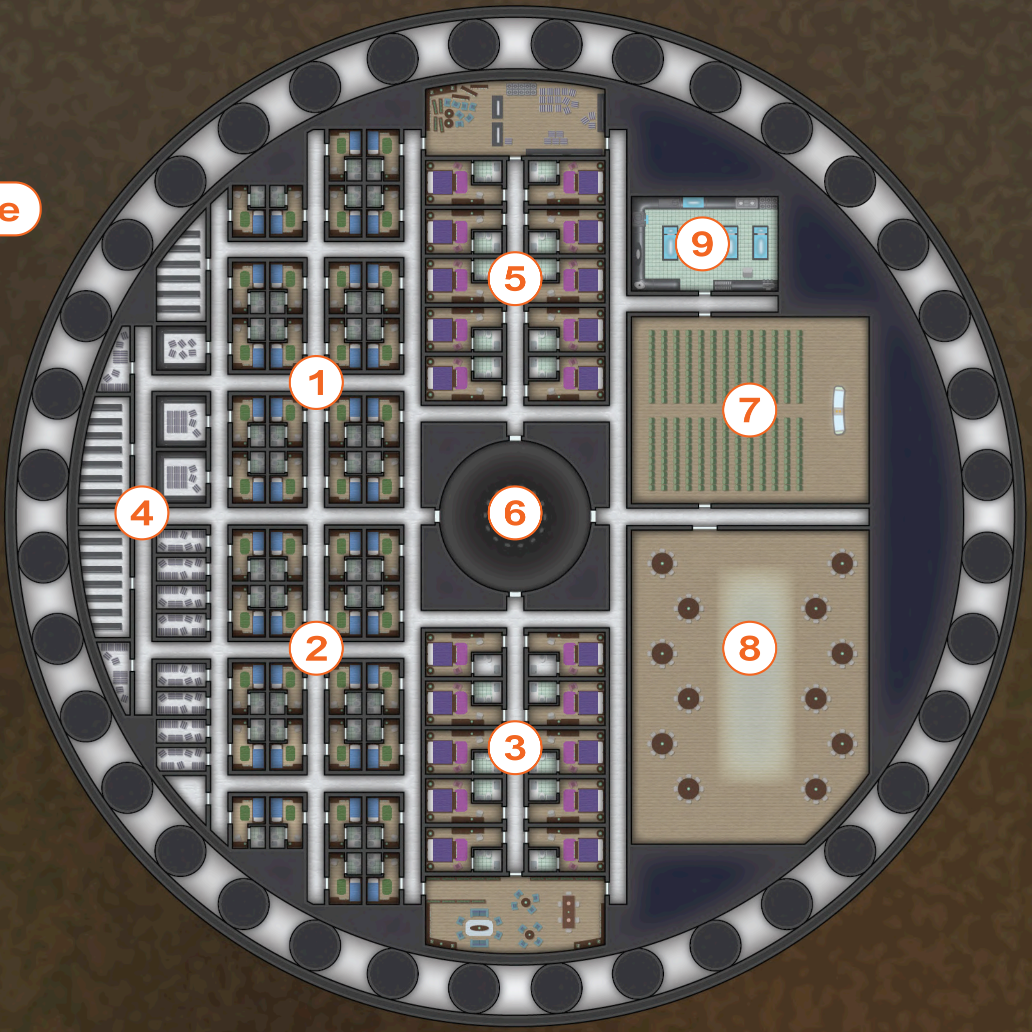
Lower Base



WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

The installation has always relied on its security robots for defence against a serious threat. Handling robots will usually deal with threats from specimens. However, there have been occasions when personnel intervention became necessary. Specialist equipment was provided and has been used liberally over the years.

Claw Suit: The 'claw suit' is a light, flexible coverall designed to protect against relatively minor threats such as a violently struggling small animal specimen. It provides Protection +2 over the whole body and can be augmented by a set of torso, forearm and lower leg protectors which increases Protection to +4. A helmet with face shield is also issued and may be replaced by a sealed full-coverage unit which has an air supply. When worn with the claw suit this rig is gas-tight and will protect against venom, airborne and bodily fluid spread pathogens providing it is not breached.

Containment Shield: A containment shield is a fancy name for what is essentially a standard rectangular security shield with a few added gizmos. These include a surface light and sound display that can mimic a fire or burst of sudden bright light to frighten a creature into backing off. Sounds can also be used; typically sirens and horns but almost anything the user considers effective can be set up. The shield can also deliver a painful electric shock but this drains its batteries quickly. After three shocks there is still enough power for the sound and light function but four will drain the unit completely.

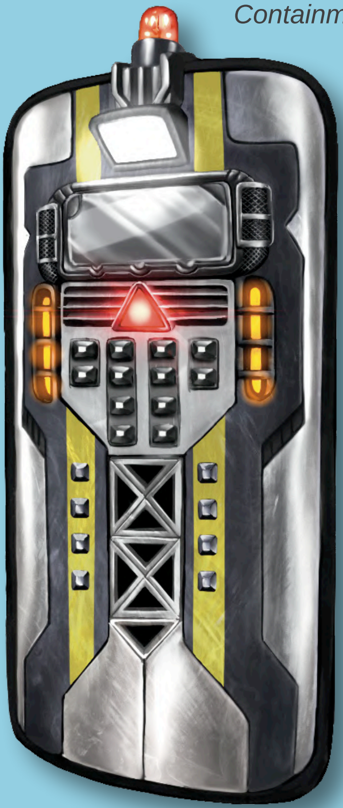
Security Shotgun: The shotguns used at Gamma are manufactured from high-tech materials but generally similar in function to most other semi-automatic smoothbores. They are chambered for a 15mm shell common in security applications but rarely used in combat weapons. The weapon is magazine-fed, using either a seven-round 'general' magazine or a three-round specialist one. General magazines are always loaded with composite shot creating a pattern of large and small impacts. Specialist magazines are for serious threats such as large creatures, delivering an explosive-tipped rifled slug designed to penetrate thick hide before exploding.

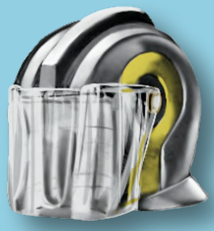
Security Handgun: The revolver-type weapons used at Gamma are designed to provide a range of capabilities without reloading. The main components are standard, firing heavy a low-velocity 12mm round. This is a hard plastic 'stunball' round which flattens on impact, delivering D3 standard damage and 2D Stun damage. It is entirely useless against any target with rigid armour or thick hide; armour counts as tripled in value against this weapon. Under the main barrel is a single-shot 16mm discharger which can be loaded with one of two types of shell. The first is a 'flarebang' which produces a bright flash and a great deal of noise. A direct hit will cause 1D damage but the round is designed to scare creatures or attract attention rather than causing harm. The second specialist round is a mini-grenade which will stick to most surfaces, including flesh. Impact causes 1D damage, then for the next 1D rounds the grenade delivers an electrical discharge causing 1D Stun damage.

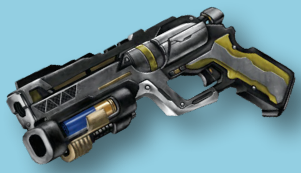
Stun Prod: The stun prods used at Gamma are similar to most others. The short version is an 80 centimetre baton; the longer one is 160 centimetre in length. Both can deliver a large number of painful shocks or a powerful discharge causing stun damage. The unit's internal battery is good for 12 powerful shocks.

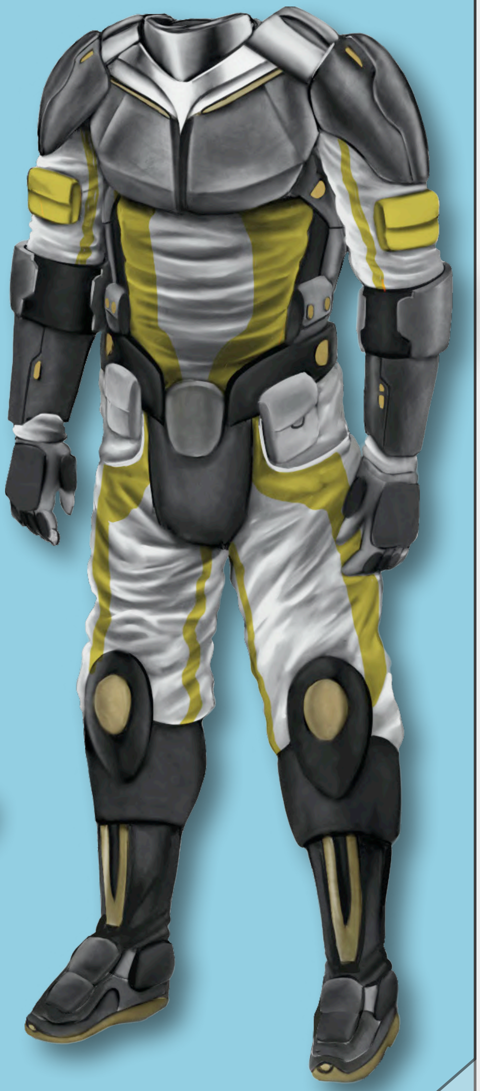
Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Claw Suit	+2 (+4)	10	0	2	Cr300	None
Containment Shield	+4	10	0	3	Cr200	None

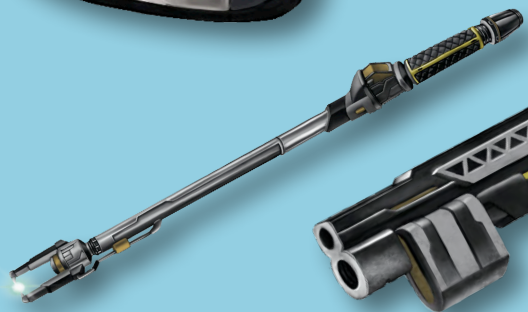
Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Security Shotgun (standard)	10	25	3D+2	4	Cr300	7	Cr7	—
Security Shotgun (specialist)	10	25	3D+6	4	Cr300	3	Cr21	AP 6
Security Handgun (stunball)	10	10	D3 (2D)	1.2	Cr200	6	Cr12	Stun
Security Handgun (grenade)	10	10	1D (1D for 1D rounds)	1.2	Cr200	1	Cr20	Stun
Stun Prod	10	Melee	2D	0.8/1.8	Cr100	—	—	Stun

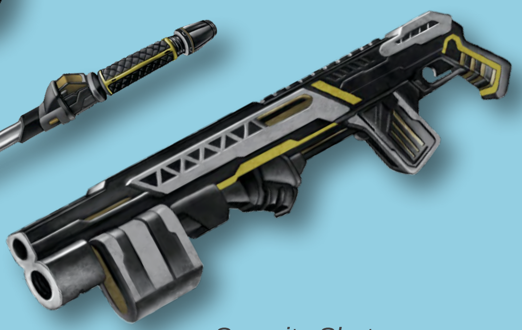

Containment Shield




Security Handgun


Claw Suit


Stun Prod


Security Shotgun

SENIOR STAFF ACCOMMODATION (5)

This network of cabins contains quarters for the more important members of the base staff. It was disused for some time, until members of the First Resort mercenary unit began working out of the installation. At that point they took over this area, closed off as much of the access as they could and began treating the once high-class facilities with contempt. The VIP lounge in this section is now part armoury, part workshop and part disaster zone.

ELEVATOR POD SHAFT (6)

The elevator pod can open in four directions on this floor. It is possible to walk around by way of the connecting corridors but most people (and robots) just use the elevator as a transit point.

LECTURE THEATRE (7)

No research facility would be complete without a lecture theatre. The one at Research Station Gamma has excellent holographic and sound systems, and can also double as an entertainment centre. The station director likes to use it to record his progress reports, usually against a suitably grandiose holographic backdrop depicting fanciful applications of the technologies he is absolutely sure he will be unlocking any day now.

BALLROOM (8)

The other large space in the eastern end of the level can be set up as a dining area, social facility or ballroom. At present it is the latter, complete with real paintings and chandeliers. It has not seen much use, other than by drunken mercenaries blowing off steam by pretending to be great nobles.

MEDICAL CENTRE (9)

The installation has a very good medical centre, which sees little use for personnel other than bites and scratches. The facility has treatment data for a vast range of species, most of which are non-sentient. Anyone taking the time to study the notes will find that some areas of ‘knowledge’ are little more than conjecture based upon observations of similar species and some data has been added as a result of experimentation or incidents at the installation. For example, there is quite a lot of information on dealing with non-life-threatening injuries to Chirpers which can only have been garnered first-hand. That suggests either very accident-prone Chirpers or a dangerous environment inflicted upon them.

UNDERGROUND UTILITY LEVEL

This level contains the power and life support machinery for the installation and also gives access to the underwater part of the facility.

REACTOR CHAMBERS (1)

The station is powered by a spacecraft-type fusion reactor which is housed in these chambers. It needs very little maintenance and most of what it does require is provided by two robots housed in a dock in one of the side chambers. The reactor’s fuel is drawn in by an underwater pipe and processed before being stored in tanks below and outside the installation’s perimeter. There is sufficient fuel for months of operation even if the intake system fails, which is just as well as the pipes are becoming clogged with seaweed. This has not yet become a problem as the intake level is well above use but with no-one monitoring the situation and ordering a clearance, the system will eventually reach the point where the tanks empty faster than they can be filled. Once the reactor goes offline, the station can operate for a few days at full capacity on stored power or could close down most of its systems and endure for weeks.

BULK STORAGE (2)

This large chamber and its side rooms are used to process and store bulk supplies brought in by cargo submersible. There are years – perhaps decades – worth of high-end ration packs suitable to serve at the captain’s table aboard a warship or to guests on a decent liner. Other chambers are full of engineering supplies and robot components. A long, airlocked tunnel with an overhead cargo handling crane runs down and out to sea, emerging on the bottom of what the base staff dubbed Deepwater Bay.

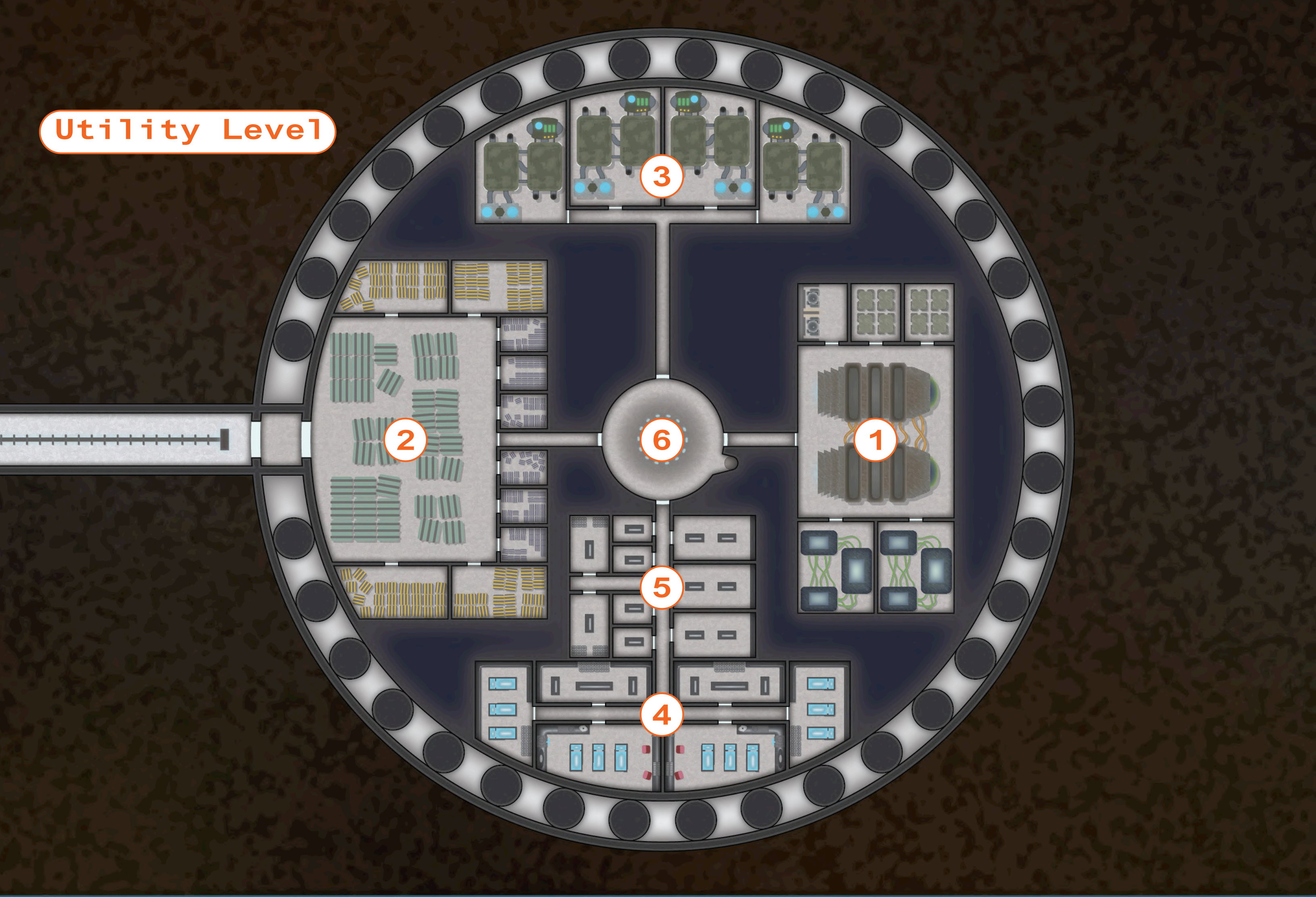
LIFE SUPPORT MACHINERY CHAMBERS (3)

The installation’s primary life support machinery is located in and controlled from these chambers. It needs little maintenance and runs automatically, so is in general forgotten about. Each level of the station has its own backup system which could function more or less indefinitely so long as there is power.

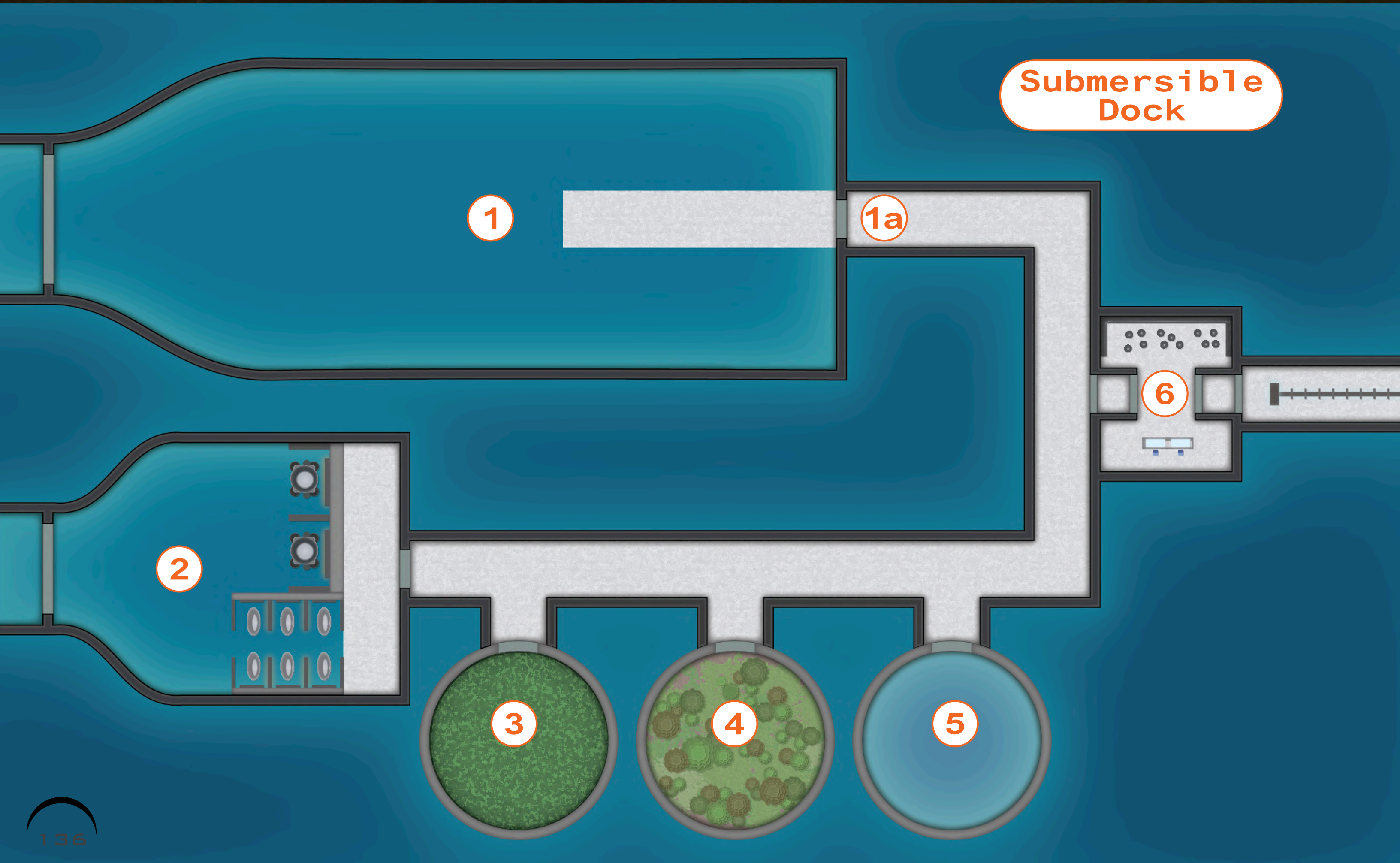
WORKSHOPS (4)

A collection of fabrication and maintenance workshops occupies the southern part of this level. It also houses a few workbots when they are not moving around the facility. The workshops are rarely used and were left in a cluttered state when some of the personnel left. Bits

Utility Level



Submersible Dock



of partially dismantled sensor and medical equipment are lying about on some of the workbenches. Fabrication equipment is available to produce anything from replacement structural sections to microcircuits.

UTILITY SPACE (5)

This area was left more or less empty other than a few workbenches, in anticipation of the staff needing a configurable space for sundry tasks. It does not appear to have seen much use.

ELEVATOR POD SHAFT (6)

The elevator shaft terminates on this level.

SUBMERSIBLE DOCK

The submersible dock is accessed by way of an airlocked tunnel from the utility level of the installation. It descends at quite a steep angle and is difficult to walk up or down. Movement is normally by way of a personnel pod carried by the overhead cargo handling system.

SUBMARINE DOCKS (1)

A long jetty with an extension of the cargo handling system projects out into a deep-water berthing area. There is room for two large cargo submersibles, although it is rare that even one is present for longer than it takes to unload. The far end is an underwater version of a canal lock; boats enter completely submerged and both sets of doors are closed, after which most of the water is pumped out and the submersible proceeds into the dock on the surface. This whole area can be completely flooded if safety protocols are overridden and both sets of lock doors are opened. The entry lock at 1a automatically closes if the water level in the dock rises too far, although this can also be overridden.

RESEARCH AND MAINTENANCE DOCKS (2)

A smaller chamber houses a number of sample-collection and remote sensor drones, plus two larger workbots designed for underwater maintenance. Their main task is keeping the approaches to the docks clear of seaweed and similar obstructions. They have not been sent out for some time. These bots can also be used to bring samples into the installation and up to the containment spheres. This requires the tunnel to be flooded and is usually done by remote control from the lab deck.

CONTAINMENT SPHERE (3)

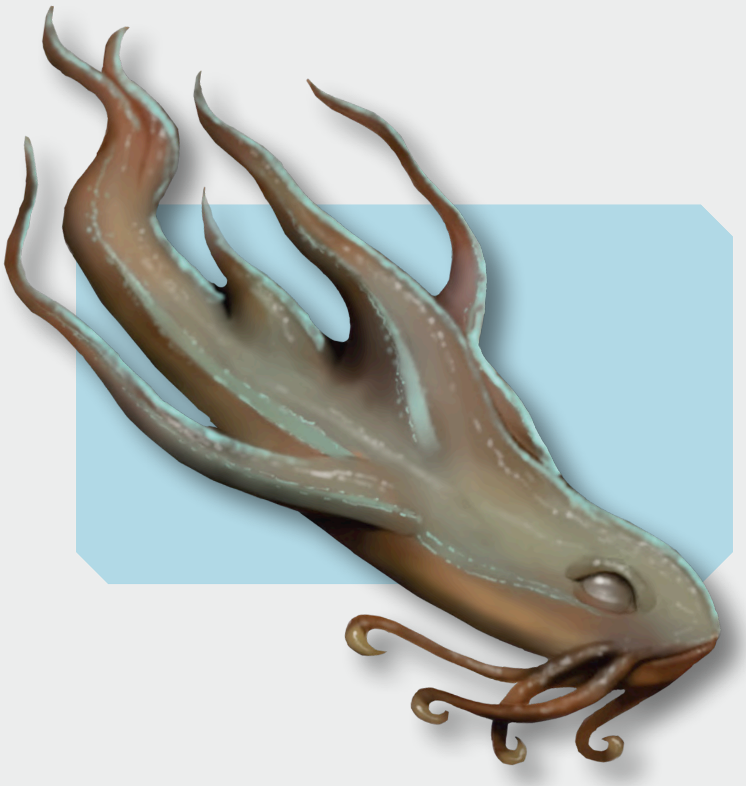
The outermost spherical containment unit is the most commonly used, although this is mostly to store unexciting samples of seaweed and seabed soil. It has been compartmentalised for this purpose but whilst samples are routinely brought in by the automated drones there has been little analysis done on them. The pod is full up to the level of its walkway with stinking, half-rotted seaweed. The maintenance system flags this for attention daily but nobody at the facility thinks it is their job to authorise a purge.

CONTAINMENT SPHERE (4)

This sphere contains a group of four Droyne recently delivered by Omicron Division. They would normally be housed in the tower spheres but the Director was advised to keep them away from the Chirpers. There is no real need for this but Omicron Division are being cautious given the origins of these Droyne. They are obviously suffering from some kind of malady but Vicervis has no idea what it might be. The Travellers will probably be able to infer a combination of shock at being forcibly taken from their Oytrip and the lack of a proper social group. There are three Workers and a Technician here, whereas a community must have at least one representative of each caste to function. These Droyne will soon die if they are not provided with the right companionship and leadership. Indeed, most Droyne might have already done so but these possess an unusually strong survival instinct as a result of Yaskoydray's desire to maintain his genetic cache.

CONTAINMENT SPHERE (5)

This sphere is full of seawater and has conditions set up to duplicate Vanejen's southern oceans. In the sphere is a collection of aquatic plants, among which lurks an unpleasant-looking 'squid-fish-thing'. Vicervis does not like the staff referring to it that way and insists on 'Specimen Vanejen Aquatic 72' in all reports. The creature *does* resemble a squid-fish-thing, with a fish-like body and long fins that resemble tentacles. Its mouth is surrounded by shorter tentacles which have vicious hooks for grasping prey. Specimen 72 displays some strange behaviour which might be connected with psionic sensing of prey and is highly aggressive. If it got out it could survive for only a short time but until it expires it is capable of moving on land using its fin/tentacles.



Animal	Hits	Speed
Squid-Fish-Thing	12	6m (swimming)
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1	
Attacks	Tentacles (2D+2)	
Traits	Armour (+2), Heightened Senses, Large (+1)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	

LOCK CHAMBER (6)

Access to the two sets of docks is by way of a security/ safety chamber with heavy-duty airlocks at each end. Lockers and stands support underwater breathing equipment and diving suits but this equipment has not been used since the installation was constructed. There are also two security pistols, two shotguns and a pair of containment shields, plus four stun prods, in locked racks along the walls. These have occasionally been deployed, most recently when the Droyne were installed in their containment sphere. This chamber is most commonly used to monitor the progress of supply submersibles and drones sent out to collect samples or perform maintenance. New arrivals must also be 'processed' into the station, which translates to being issued a temporary identification badge/access card and told where they are not allowed to go.

LAB DECK UPPER LEVEL

The upper lab deck is now the private preserve of the Acting Director, who grants access as the whim or need takes him. It houses grav vehicle landing areas and the administrative apparatus of the installation. Some of this deck has been repurposed.

ELEVATOR SHAFT (1)

The elevator shaft terminates at this level. The pod always returns here as its resting point unless it has been held elsewhere for some imminent need. When it is not present the central shaft dominates the chamber. It is surrounded by a retractable guard rail but could still pose a hazard to extremely careless Travellers. When present, the pod completely fills this area. A set of roof hatches allows the pod to function as an escape capsule in an extreme emergency.

MANUAL ACCESS POINT (2)

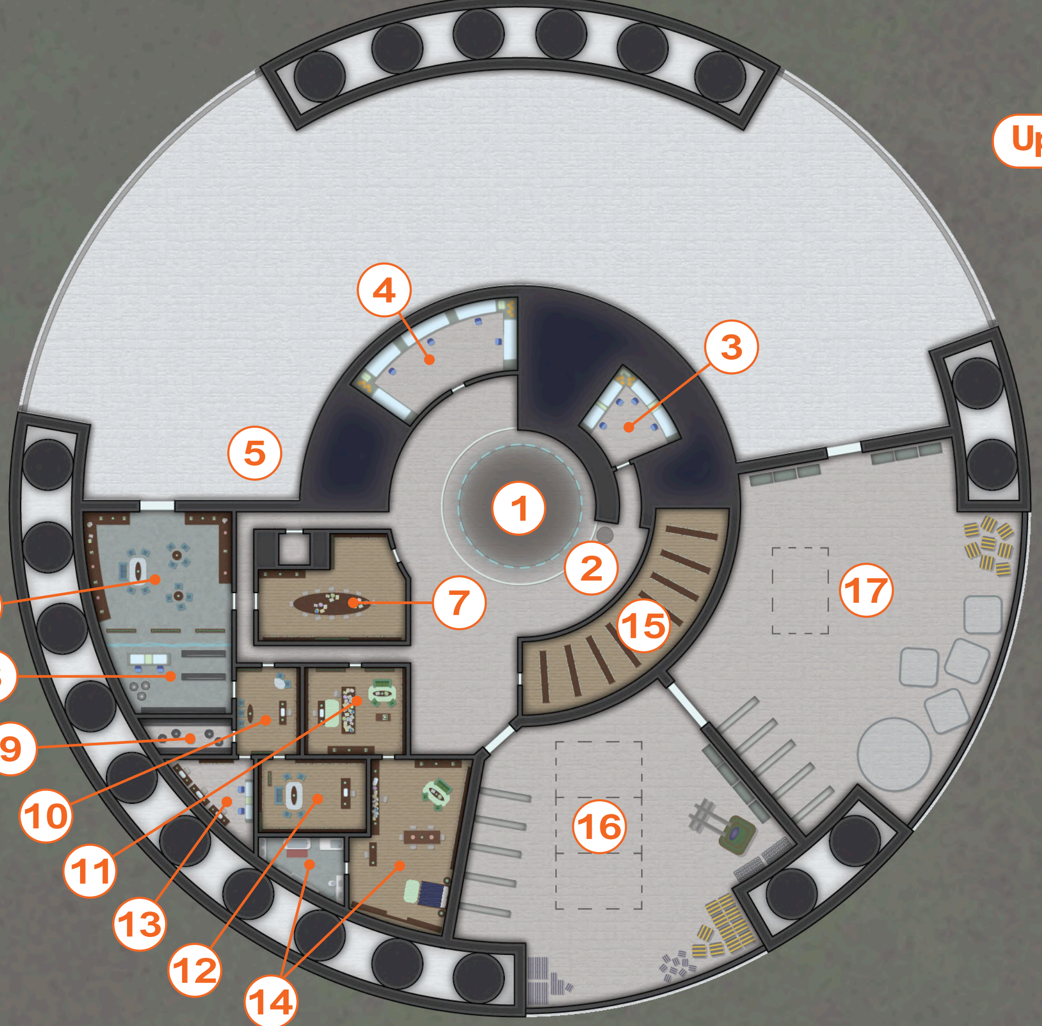
Manual access to the shaft is possible at this level and by way of a similar access point in the utility decks. This requires climbing down a set of handholds, which is less dangerous than it looks as there is an emergency grav-lift mechanism here. This is intended to save the lives of anyone falling into the shaft but can be used for personal transit, at least as far as wherever the elevator pod has halted.

CENTRAL COMPUTER CHAMBER (3)

The research station has backup servers located throughout its structure, some in locations inaccessible under normal conditions. This main chamber is primarily a security and control facility; reprogramming and access to sensitive files can only be accomplished in this room except by direct (and temporary) permission of the Director. With a great deal of effort it would be possible to reprogramme the installation's security features or disable some of them. This would be a long job but it is the only way to be sure. Otherwise, hidden redundant servers will come online and bring critical functions back online – including the security system.

ELECTRONIC ARCHIVE CHAMBER (4)

This chamber is dedicated to backups-of-backups and is surrounded by heavy bulkheads which are designed to withstand a major electromagnetic pulse effect. In theory, a nuclear detonation that flattened the station would leave the archives intact and recoverable. There is no programming access here; although there are terminals the system only permits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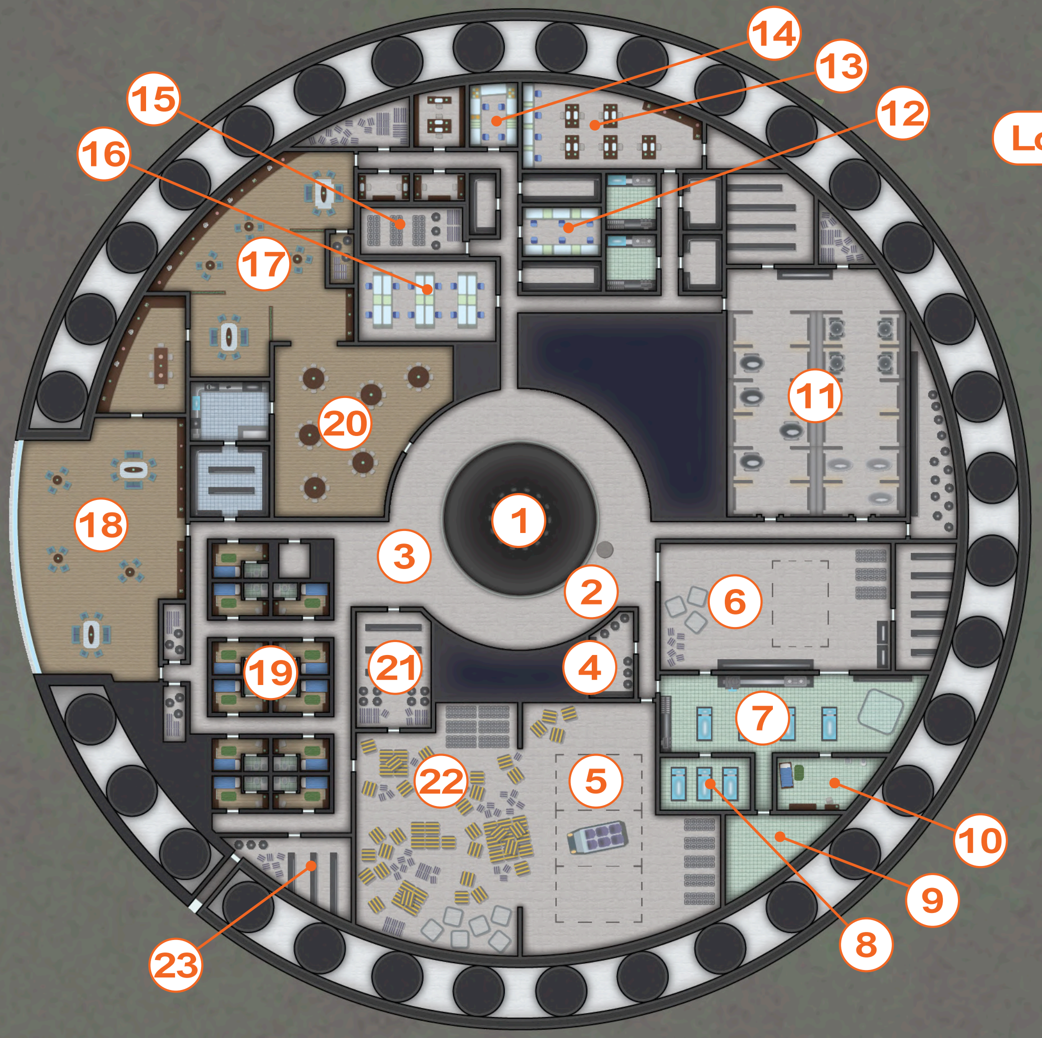
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alterations to its code in the main computer chamber. This room is rarely entered at all but Vicervis has stashed some emergency supplies – ration packs, clothing and a large wad of hard cash – in case of some unexpected disaster.

INTERNAL ELEVATOR (5)

A light internal elevator capable of carrying four humanoid people links the upper and lower lab decks. Vicervis uses it by preference over the large pod, as that is sometimes used to move specimens around and seems somehow beneath his dignity. He rarely feels the need to descend from his ivory tower, in any case.

HOSPITALITY AREA AND BALCONY (6)

Visitors arriving by grav vehicle will land on the wide balcony outside this chamber, after which its external shutters will be raised to keep out the arctic sleet. Entry into the station is by way of the hospitality area. In recent years Vicervis has received few visitors this way and now actively discourages it. The peasantry can take the monorail from the landing area or the elevator from the submarine docks. Even grav vehicles are now directed to the 'spaceport', as he rather grandly refers to it. This area has become a personal lounge where particularly favoured guests can be entertained. It has been restocked with an excellent selection of wines, spirits and delicacies. The rear of the chamber is delineated by a hologram of a waterfall. It offers no resistance to anyone walking through it.

MEETING ROOM (7)

This chamber has been entirely taken over with Vicervis' work. He likes to make handwritten notes on printer flimsy; endless pages of neurotic, close-written script. These accumulate in piles which are then ransacked for a critical equation noted down three weeks ago, resulting in frustration and delays. This room might be a goldmine for scientific research if anyone had the time to sift through all the notes and collate them, but at present it is just a heap of paper.

SECURITY ANNEX (8)

At the rear of the hospitality room, this area was once a security station. The holographic waterfall is transparent on this side. It is no longer used to monitor guests as Vicervis rarely receives them and has been repurposed as a stash for the really expensive wines and spirits.

MAINTENANCE LOCKER (9)

This locker contains ready-use supplies for cleaning and maintaining the deck. Most are mundane, although there are compounds for rapidly neutralising noxious chemical spills.

DIRECTOR'S FOYER (10)

Originally a reception point for visitors and general administrative office for the installation, this chamber is rarely used except as a thoroughfare.

DIRECTOR'S LOUNGE (11)

Vicervis has taken over what used to be an office and turned it into a small private lounge. Visitors are unlikely to be invited in but anyone who does gain access will find it something of a mess. Books – actual, paper books – are strewn about every flat surface along with pages of scribbled flimsy that seem to be indexes of other piles of flimsy.

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE (12)

Vicervis took over what was a vacant office for his own not long after he became Acting Director. In contrast to his private and working spaces, this area is painfully neat and tidy. If he must interact with visitors he prefers it to be here – an area noticeably vacant of any of his scientific work.

OFFICE (13)

This office has not been used much since the staff complement shrank. Up to that point it was used by whomever needed it. A scattering of data, across a great many subjects, is unsecured in the desktop console and data chips. None of this is related to psionics however. Topics range from soil and rock composition on various worlds to feeding habits of obscure jungle birds. There is some speculation about possible anagathic properties of some plants and animal organs but the most valuable item to be found in the data storage is a set of mineral surveys indicating concentrations of rare earth elements on various worlds in the Marches. This might be useful to a survey company if properly collated.

DIRECTOR'S CHAMBER (14)

What was the installation's main office is now the private chamber of the Acting Director. This required an extensive conversion carried out by using starship-cabin components. It was done well enough but the awkward shape of the chamber has resulted in wasted space and odd little voids.

LIBRARY (15)

The research station has an extensive library of paper books, in addition to millions of volumes on data chip and a huge stack of the Acting Director's notebooks. Some of the books are quite random in topic – anything from children's rhymes to cookbooks – but most deal with psionics or xenobiology. There is also an extensive section on the Zhodani people and their society. Many of these volumes are not available in electronic form, suggesting they have been expunged or never uploaded – perhaps as a security measure.

AIR/RAFT MAINTENANCE BAY ELEVATOR (16)

Standard air/rafts or similar vehicles can be lowered to the deck below on this elevator, allowing them to be stored, loaded or maintained in a closed environment. The outer shutters around this area are routinely kept closed, as vehicles have not operated from here for some time.

AIR/RAFT ELEVATOR (17)

A second air/raft elevator gives access to an area on the deck below set up for receiving samples. This has not been used in some time and is normally kept shuttered.

LAB DECK LOWER LEVEL

The lower lab deck is where most of the station's work was carried out. In addition, it contains various utility spaces.

ELEVATOR SHAFT (1)

The central elevator shaft is not walled-in on this level and is surrounded by a guard rail like the one on the deck above. The circular walkway around the shaft is the primary means of access to most of the level.

MANUAL ACCESS POINT (2)

A manual access point similar to the one on the deck above allows personnel to enter the walls of the shaft at need.

WALKWAY (3)

A railed walkway extends right round the elevator shaft. The elevator pod will turn to point its doors at anyone waiting for it, then realign to the destination door on the way. This can confuse visitors into thinking the station is laid out quite differently from what its deck plans indicate.

SECURITY STATION (4)

This level's security station controls access between the sample receiving area and the rest of the facility. It has not been used in a long time. There are two security pistols and two shotguns, plus four prods, in their locked holders on the wall.

AIR/RAFT GARAGE (5)

The air/raft garage has berths for three standard hard-topped air/rafts. These are the station's utility vehicles. Only one is present; the other two are routinely parked on the ground outside the facility, at the landing pad or in the temporary buildings at ground level.

MAIN SAMPLE RECEPTION AREA (6)

Samples, usually in the form of living creatures, can be brought directly into the research station by way of the air/raft elevator from the deck above. Any light grav vehicle can carry out this function but most commonly a 'stretch' model air/raft is used which can carry a party of 10 drivers and handlers and has a containment area in the rear. This vehicle is intended to be housed in this part of the research station but is normally parked on the ground outside.

LABORATORY (7)

The facility's main biological/biochemical research chamber is protected by heavy doors and sealed against airborne hazards. Currently, specimens are more commonly brought in by way of the central lift shaft than by grav vehicle but either way they go through primary screening in the sample reception area and are then conveyed into the laboratory.

HOLDING CELLS (8,9,10)

Three environmentally controlled holding cells form an annex to the laboratory. One is currently empty, whilst another is kept at a very low temperature in order to preserve the partially dissected carcasses of three Chirpers. The third has a human occupant. This is Aish Nirka, the so-called 'Captain of Knowledge' who featured in *Mysteries of the Ancients*.

ROBOT STABLES (11)

This area is dedicated to the maintenance and repair of robots operating throughout the lab decks and in the containment spheres. Each has its own charging and diagnostic station and there is a workshop area for any work that needs doing. It is well stocked with spares and equipment but has not seen much use in the past few years. As a result the robots are becoming a little erratic and most have at least some cosmetic damage.

AISH NIRKHA, THE CAPTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE

Aish Nirkha is a deluded, self-important fool who has decided he comes from an ancient bloodline charged with secret knowledge. Styling himself the Captain of Knowledge he made a lot of noise on the Datanets and opened a Museum of the Ancients. Serious scholars of the Ancients disregarded him as yet another 'Deludo' but he gained a following among the equally clueless. Ultimately this led to him being used as a tool by Omicron Division, setting up a conference intended to draw out real Ancients Hunters for questioning. During this incident, Nirkha could not resist running his mouth off to the point where Omicron Division had to arrest him. They have been stuck with him since.

The Captain of Knowledge kept scattergunning fragments of conjecture and wild hypothesis during his captivity, including his interpretation of the notorious epic poem Twilight's Peak. He was wrong about the nature and location of the eponymous mountain, of course, but when an actual Ancients base turned up – and was subsequently destroyed by a planetbuster bomb – Omicron Division decided to hang onto their infuriating captive a little longer. Perhaps there was some truth behind his nonsense after all…

Lacking resources due to a crisis elsewhere, Omicron Division dumped the Captain of Knowledge at Research Station Gamma and asked the staff to find out what he knew. He has since been a sort-of-captive, alternately locked in a holding cell and given free range of the facility in return for answers to the Director's many questions. It is a measure of how loose the Acting Director's grasp on reality has become that he has begun seriously factoring the Captain's claims into his work.

Aish Nirkha is no less annoying than before and if anything his convictions are even deeper now he has seen that Omicron Division really exists. He is offended at his captivity but has redefined it as proof of his importance – the cosmos is not ready for his latest revelations and Omicron Division knows it! He has also convinced himself that the Acting Director is becoming dependent on him for information which will lead to immense breakthroughs.

On the other hand, Nirkha is scared. He is dealing with no-kidding professionals like Omicron Division on one hand and trigger-happy yahoos like the First Resort mercenaries on the other. He wants to get away from Research Station Gamma and start telling everyone how great it was there. He is also concerned about the way the test subjects are being treated and finds it hard to reconcile the brilliant (and gullible) Acting Director Vicervis with the sort of scientist who torments sentient creatures on the off chance they may do something interesting.

The Referee should keep in mind that Nirkha no longer knows what is true and what he has invented. He will cover a hole in his story with fabrications or a haughty assertion that the listener has simply not understood. There are often holes in his stories that a 12-year-old could point out but nevertheless he will not retract anything. Endless qualifications, expansions and restatements obfuscate everything to the point where even the Captain of Knowledge himself may not be sure what he is claiming.

Nirkha retains his habit of launching into a discourse about something he knows next to nothing about with complete conviction and knows better than everyone no matter what degrees they have. He always knows something nobody else does and will patiently explain why everyone else is misinformed. The Referee should note that Aish's EDU stat is very low to reflect the probability that what he does know is contaminated by invention and wild inference to the point where he is unlikely to get anything right – but that will not prevent him presenting a great deal of information as if it were all completely correct.

Given the chance to get away from Research Station Gamma, Nirkha will eagerly take it, yet at the same time he will try to make the escape somehow his own doing or on his own terms and will not stop being himself long enough to let anyone help him. He is not completely divorced from reality but it is only a matter of time before the papers are served. He might betray the Travellers' plans to the Director for reasons that make sense to him at the time. In short, he is completely unreliable most of the time but his actions do make sense from his own perspective.

DATA CENTRE (12)

The data centre contains several general and specialist computers. These do not operate any part of the station but are purely research machines. Some are specialised processors which can be optimised for particular branches of mathematics, their function complex and abstruse. Others are set up to quickly model electrochemical processes in various neural networks. At present the collective effort of all this processing power is directed at creating a model of the Chirper brain and variants upon it.

OFFICES (13)

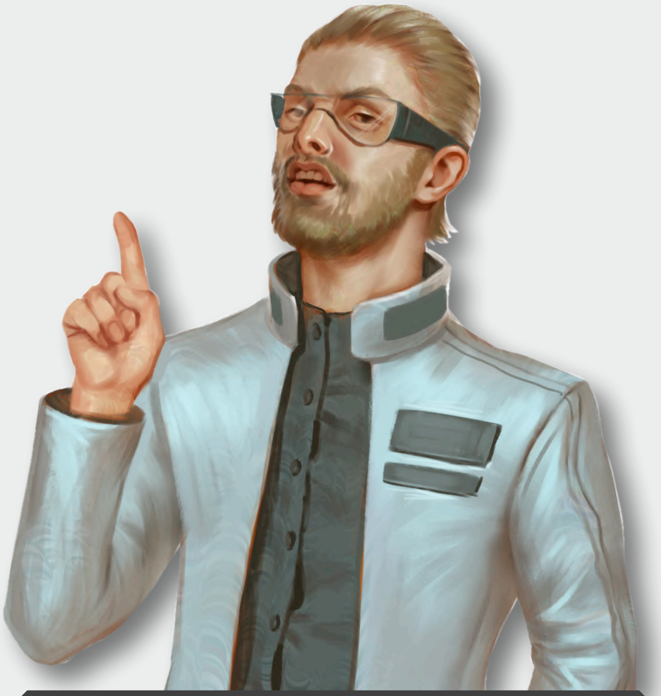
The offices of 'lesser' scientists were cleared out when they left the facility. This area is rarely used except when Aish Nirkha is allowed out of his cell. He is given access to a desktop computer which can only request date from the main system with special permission. The device is full of his notes, ideas, sketches and recordings of his diatribes on subjects as diverse as shoe design and the effects of jumpspace on certain kinds of algae.

DETECTION AND TRACKING STATION (14)

Most of the time this specialist chamber automatically monitors the surrounding sea and airspace, and anything passing overhead in orbit. It has been set to grant landing permission to vessels with the right transponder codes and warn all others off. At need, the islet's weapons mounts can be controlled from here, requiring an authorised person in possession of a master security key. The Acting Director has one; the others are in the Vault.

VAULT (15)

The vault is surrounded by thick bulkheads and secured by an electronically locked door. Access requires an authorised person or possession of a master security key. The vault contains bulk-data backups of everything the research station has done – including both research and mundane data on supply levels and such matters as the temperature of chambers. In addition, the vault contains two standard autopistols with one spare magazine each and a nearly-full box of spare ammunition, a pallet of Imperial Credit plaques worth just under MCr1.2 and several boxes of artefacts. Most of these are fragments of building materials and other useless items, but there is a partial set of Coyns, as used in Droyne casteing rituals, and two cracked crystals the Travellers will recognise as damaged data storage gems.



AISH NIRKHA (CAPTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE)

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	45

TRAITS	—

STR	4	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	2	Carouse 3, Investigate 2, Leadership 1, Persuade 6
END	9	SOC	6	

WEAPONS	Patronising tone, condescending finger-wagging, soul-crushingly obscure lectures

COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE (16)

The installation's main communications facility has been running in automatic mode for years now. Contact is maintained with the starport and any visiting vessels, with uploads of data made when a ship with the right transponder code requests them. The console should be locked when not in use but has been set to 'open: any user' mode for convenience.

LOUNGE AND RECREATION AREA (17)

The installation's main recreation chamber and its annexes see relatively little use these days. The Acting Director prefers to use the one upstairs and would only come here if hosting a party of visitors. The quality of available foods and wines is decent but not up to the standards of Vicervis' private stash.

OBSERVATION DECK (18)

This chamber is set up to allow observation of the seascape to the west through a transparent outer wall. In the early days of the station it was quite popular but is now virtually disused.

QUARTERS (19)

The installation was originally over-provided with accommodation. It was envisaged that the scientific staff would dwell on the laboratory deck in these cabins whilst supporting staff used ground-level accommodation. Some cabins have never been used and most were vacated as their occupants left or were sent away from the facility. Some of the furnishings have been removed to Vicervis' private chambers on the deck above.

MESS HALL (20)

The mess hall was intended for working-day meals rather than grand functions and it shows. Its automated kitchen annex is well stocked with high-end ration packs.

EXPEDITION EQUIPMENT STORAGE (21)

This area originally housed equipment for scientific expeditions and more general trips outside using the installation's air/rafts. Current preference is to operate from ground level, so most of the gear has been relocated to the lower levels. There are a few items of clothing – parkas, snow boots and the like – which have not been moved, along with racks of mundane items such as flashlights and radio-location beacons.

AIR/RAFT MAINTENANCE AREA (22)

Forming a single chamber with area 6, this end of the maintenance bay is cluttered with spares and supplies. Most of these are in heavy crates that could not be pushed aside by one of the installation's security robots, creating an area that would require a manual search by staff if someone or something were suspected of being hidden there.

STORAGE AND EXTERNAL ACCESS (23)

The general-stores area does contain items useful in the running of the installation but these are buried under boxes of personal items. Anything left behind by installation staff who left or were ordered away was boxed up and dumped in here. Shoes, clothing and personal effects are also scattered around the shelves. In some cases it seems items were shoved in here with genuine spite rather than a lack of care; some have clearly been thrown in a manner intended to cause harm to them or at least demonstrate contempt.

The corridor beside this area leads to an external hatch, from which it is possible to climb out onto a set of handholds and conduct an inspection or climb up to the roof to check the antennae. A grav belt for the use of the person assigned to this task hangs on a set of pegs beside the hatch.

RESEARCH STATION GAMMA ROBOTS

The installation was provided with a set of robots to handle most mundane tasks. These include armed security 'bots, which is a violation of Imperial law. Most are workers or animal-handling types which will go about their tasks without taking note of visitors other than to avoid colliding with them. The security robots are programmed to patrol the installation in both regular and random patterns. Vicervis considers this unnecessary as the security system feeds data from internal sensors and cameras to the robots' control system anyway. In short, unless the data flow is interrupted the robots know where everyone is at all times.

WORKER, TYPE 1

Type 1 worker robots undertake most of the mundane tasks around the installation, mostly tidying-up and cleaning duties, which are constant, and the occasional diversion to assist with tasks requiring additional hands – or grabbers, in this case. The robot consists of a broad, low base with multiple sets of independently steerable wheels and a generally cylindrical torso bearing two manipulator arms. These robots do not carry weapons.

WORKER, TYPE 2

Type 2 worker robots handle tasks requiring dexterity and access to awkward spaces. They take the form of a 1 metre long ovoid which rides on a gravitic propulsion system. A long manipulator arm is paired with a lightly constructed diagnostic plug set that can be worked into narrow or twisty spaces. Several could, in theory, lift something heavy working in concert but this risks burning out manipulator arm motors in the lifter unit itself.

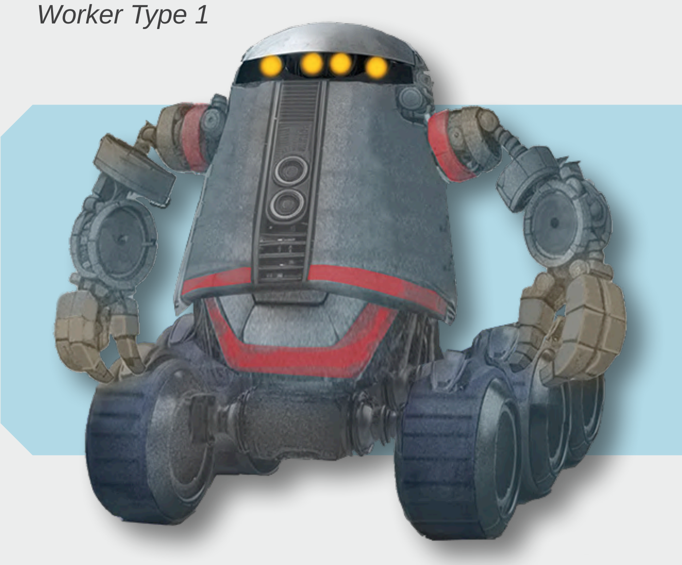
Robot	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
Worker, Type 1	24	5m	15	Cr30000

Locomotion	Wheels
Skills	Athletics (strength) 2, Mechanic 0, Profession (janitor) 0
Attacks	None (Insistent beeping)
Manipulators	2 x (STR 12 DEX 9)
Endurance	144 hours
Traits	Armour (+4)
Programming	Basic (none) (INT 4)
Options	Auditory Sensor, Drone Interface, Industrial Cleaning Equipment (medium), Storage Compartment (standard) 3 slots, Transceiver 5km (improved), Visual Spectrum Sensor, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link

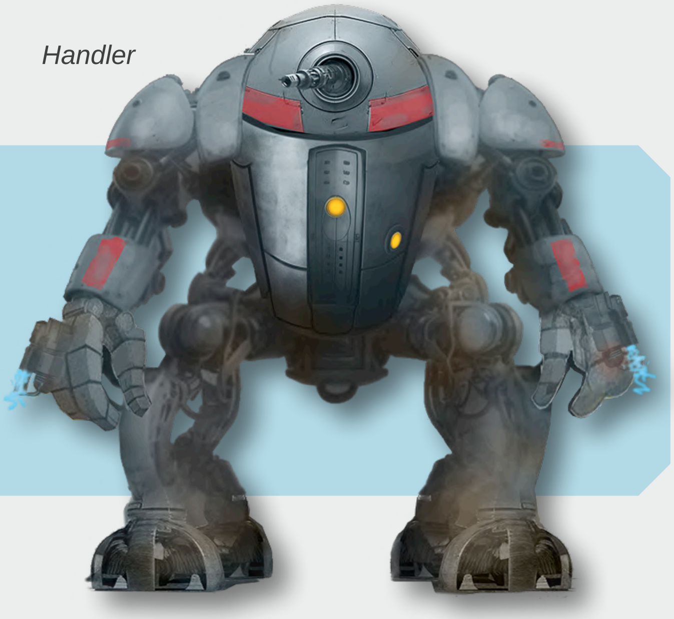
Robot	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
Worker, Type 2	15	8m	15	Cr60000

Locomotion	Grav
Skills	Electronics (comms) 1, Electronics (computer) 2, Electronics (sensors) 1, Mechanic 2
Attacks	—
Manipulators	1 x (STR 4 DEX 12)
Endurance	38 hours
Traits	Armour (+4), Flyer (idle), IR/UV Vision, Small (-1)
Programming	Advanced (INT 9)
Options	Auditory Sensor, Drone Interface, Electronics Toolkit (improved), Mechanical Toolkit (improved), PRIS Sensor, Quick Charger, Transceiver 5km (improved), Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link

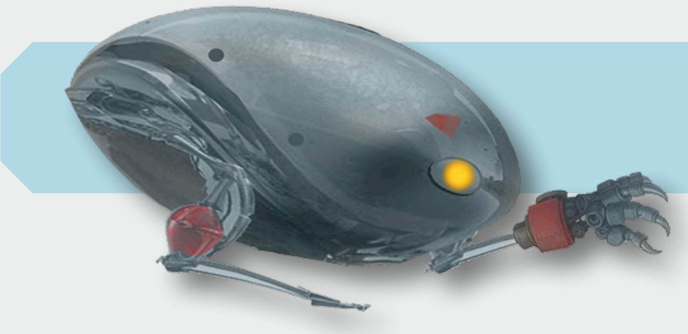
Worker Type 1



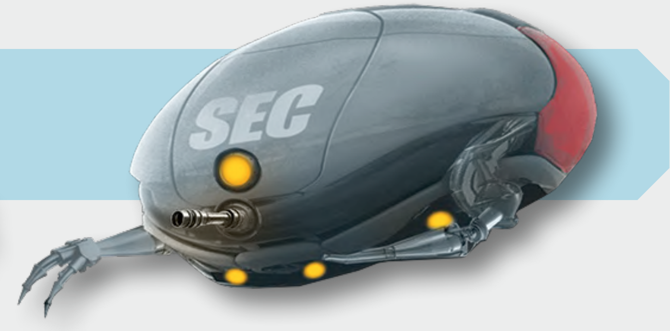
Handler



Worker Type 2



Security



HANDLER

Specimen handler robots resemble security units to the casual observer. They are heavily built, with a cylindrical torso mounted on a four-legged walker chassis. Two heavy manipulator arms and two lighter ones are capable of restraining most creatures using grabbers or a range of custom appendages. The robots are armed with a stun prod on each of the heavy arms and a small turret-like appendage on the top which carries a snub pistol. This is routinely loaded with tranquiliser rounds which can be tailored to different creatures. At need, the handler robots can internally switch to armour-piercing ammunition, of which 10 rounds are carried. This is a violation of Imperial law but is just one of many where Research Station Gamma is concerned.

Robot	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
Handler	24	5m	15	Cr60000
Locomotion	Walker			
Skills	Animals (handling) 2, Animals (veterinary) 2, Athletics (strength) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (bludgeon) 2			
Attacks	Melee (1D+2), Stunstick (2D, Stun), Bash and Stun (1D+2 + 2D Stun), Snub Pistol (Tranq* or 3D-3, AP 3)			
Manipulators	2 x (STR 12 DEX 9), 2 X (STR 7 DEX 9)			
Endurance	144 hours			
Traits	Armour (+6), ATV (idle)			
Programming	Advanced (INT 9)			
Options	Auditory Sensor, Drone Interface, Fire Control System (basic),Transceiver 5km (improved), Visual Spectrum Sensor, Voder Speaker, Weapon Mounts (small) x3, Wireless Data Link			

* Attacked as if by a poison with a Difficult (10+) END check, Damage unconscious and Interval of one round.

SECURITY

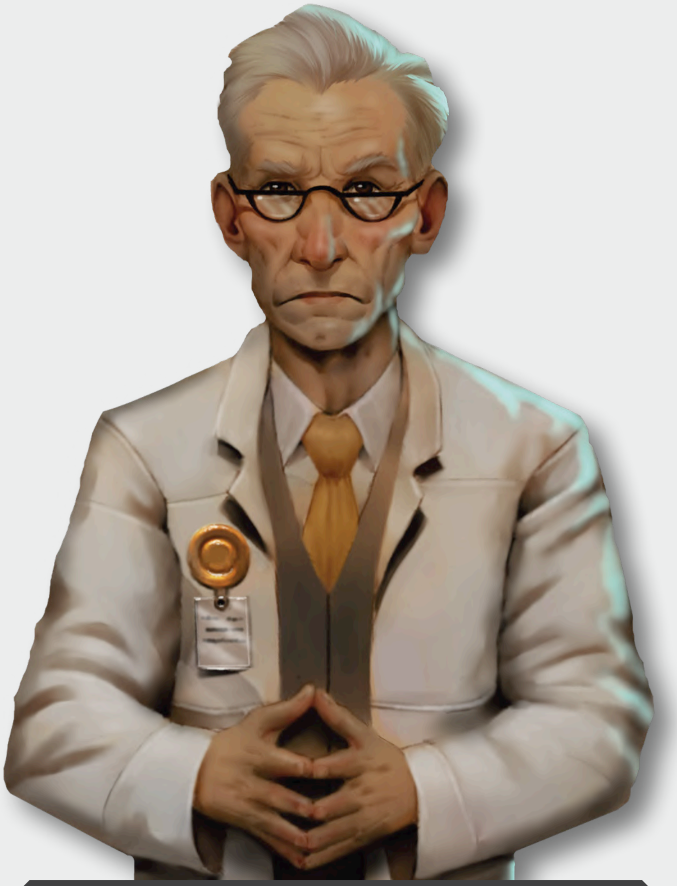
Security robots resemble larger versions of the Type 2 worker. They are grav-mobile and can reach any point in the installation or the surrounding land in moments. A pair of grapples can be used to capture intruders or to assist with animal handling, in addition to which the robots have a small turret-like mounting at their fore end. This mounts a snub pistol loaded with tranq or armour-piercing ammunition and a powerful but short-ranged laser weapon. It is fully effective out to 10 metres, after which damage drops by 1D per additional five metres. These ranges are halved in conditions of poor visibility such as fog or heavy rain.

Robot	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
Security	28	8m	15	Cr120000
Locomotion	Grav			
Skills	Athletics (strength) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (bludgeon) 2, Recon 3, Tactics (military) 2			
Attacks	Laser (5D), Melee (1D+2), Snub Pistol (Tranq* or 3D-3, AP 3)			
Manipulators	2 x (STR 12 DEX 9)			
Endurance	38 hours			
Traits	Armour (+12), IR/UV Vision, Flyer (idle)			
Programming	Hunter/Killer (tactical) (INT 4)			
Options	Auditory Sensor, Drone Interface, Fire Control System (improved), PRIS Sensor, Quick Charger, Recon Sensor (advanced), Transceiver 5km (improved), Voder Speaker, Weapon Mount (small), Weapon Mount (medium), Wireless Data Link			

* Attacked as if by a poison with a Difficult (10+) END check, Damage unconscious and Interval of one round.

THE ACTING DIRECTOR

In control of Research Station Gamma is Sir Gnetus Jerrold Vicervis, holder of multiple doctorates and other academic degrees. His history, in terms of institutions attended and specific qualifications awarded, is classified but it is possible for interested Travellers to puzzle some of it out. Vicervis is 102 years old and has been outside the mainstream academic world for at least five decades. If the Travellers search hard enough they can find old records of someone of the same name attending the University of Rhylanor as an undergraduate, then joining a sponsored graduate research project. These are usually aimed at co-opting the best and brightest into research programmes that benefit megacorporations of the Imperium as a whole. It seems likely that Vicervis was at the University of Rhylanor or one of its subsidiaries for some years, as his name appears on a number of research papers. Eventually, even this faint trail goes cold.



SIR GNETUS JERROLD VICERVIS

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE	
Human		Male		102	
TRAITS			—		
STR	3	INT	14	SKILLS	
DEX	5	EDU	14	Admin 3, Electronics (computer) 6, Flyer (grav) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Investigate 6, Jack-of-all-Trades 3, Persuade 4, Science (broad-based) 6	
END	3	SOC	11		
WEAPONS			Target Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2)		

Vicervis did indeed pursue a successful academic career, which was funded by the sector administration. He was managed from a distance by the intelligence services and deemed suitable for a post at a sensitive installation. Since that time he has worked in research facilities like this one and was a natural choice for a senior post at Gamma. His lack of ethics was of some concern but it was expected that he would be kept in check by the original director. When that individual passed away from what was almost certainly natural causes it was simplest to allow him to take charge for the interim. The interim became effectively permanent.

There can be no denying Vicervis is brilliant and his ability to cross-reference different fields of study and somehow find connections has advanced science – particularly in the field of psionics – by years or even decades. However he is also egotistical, petty and vindictive. One of his pet hates is being referred to as ‘Acting Director’. He is the Director now and anyone who says different is on their way to becoming an enemy. Vicervis considers himself the owner of Research Station Gamma and everything in it. He is used to holding the power of life and death over creatures in the containment globes, and by a series of small steps has gone from being willing to harm non-sentient creatures in the name of science to not really caring about the suffering of anyone but himself.

Vicervis considers Chirpers to be ‘just animals really’ and has transferred this attitude to Droyne. He will cite the apathetic and confused behaviour of the captive Droyne as proof. Even fellow humans and other well-recognised sentients mean little to him unless he has come to approve of or like them. Approval, of a condescending sort, is granted to those who obey his instructions and pander to his ego. He will like only those he considers intellectually worthy and who are also sufficiently respectful. New arrivals will be given the chance to show they are worth interacting with, after which they are pigeonholed as suitably respectful associates, useful underlings who know their place or rabble worthy only of contempt.

At first Vicervis is likely to be gracious and charming, as this gives him the chance to receive respect and demonstrate his intellect and culture. He will rapidly start to take visitors for granted and order them around unless they really impress him or there is some reason why he has to subordinate himself. He lords it over most Omicron Division personnel who visit the facility but has been put in his place by some of the more senior officials, with reminders about who controls the funding and keeps the authorities from auditing Gamma.

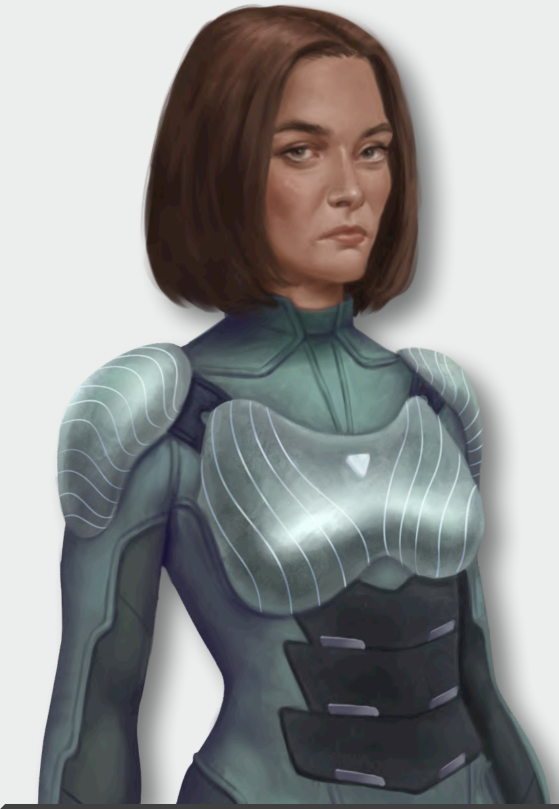
It is unlikely Vicervis will consider anyone at the installation to be a threat. He has become so used to being the lord of his ivory tower that the idea of overthrow or other unfortunate circumstances is unlikely to occur to him. This is part complacency and part contempt; only Vicervis is fit to run Gamma, so obviously an inferior intellect could not challenge him. Thus far his connections with Omicron Division and the security robots have proven sufficient to keep threats so far at bay that he has forgotten they can exist.

Vicervis considers himself far above petty concerns like personal violence but he was a competitive pistol shooter in his youth. He has a long-barrelled gauss pistol, set up for target work but entirely lethal, in his quarters and will use it without hesitation if he deems it necessary. This is a line he has not yet crossed but he considers it his right to determine the fate of everyone in the installation. If sufficiently angered or threatened he would shoot someone and would not find it hard to come up with a justification afterwards.

MERCEDES KARAMAKA

Mercedes is actually a contemporary of Vicervis, although they never met during his career in academia and hers in the Scout Service. The Travellers know her from an encounter during *Mysteries of the Ancients*, last seen escaping her hideout ahead of an attack by Omicron Division. Her tale since then is a complex one, which she probably will not have time to explain to the Travellers. The gist of it is: she made a deal with Omicron Division out of necessity and so far the deal is holding up.

Mercedes was one of the adventurers who found the Ancients base at Twilight's Peak and is the author of the incredibly long and poorly-written epic poem said to contain clues about the location of the site. She has since lived several lives, changing her identity every few years, and continued to research the Ancients. Her work was quiet and methodical, conducted without fanfare and generally unknown to the Ancients Hunter community. For decades she was a consultant for those who really knew something, valuing her anonymity but willing to risk it to help those who could, in turn, help her.



MERCEDES KARAMAKA

SPECIES		**GENDER**		**AGE**
—		Female		46
TRAITS		—		
STR	7	**INT**	12	**SKILLS**
DEX	8	**EDU**	11	Admin 2, Astrogator 1, Diplomat 1, Electronics (computer) 2, Electronics (sensors) 4, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Investigate 5, Jack-of-all-Trades 2, Leadership 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Science (archaeology) 2, Science (history) 3, Steward 2, Vacc Suit 3
END	6	**SOC**	7	
WEAPONS		Disintegrator (1Dx1D)		
ARMOUR		Environment Suit (+6)		

That changed when the Travellers came to visit Mercedes and Omicron Division arrived soon after. Mercedes' inclination was to disappear but then her sources informed her that Twilight's Peak had been found… and destroyed. Realising that something major was afoot, Mercedes began collecting information. An entire planet destroyed, a giant crater in another. Rumours of a titanic battle between two Ancients… and at the centre of it all, the Travellers.

An old friend came to Mercedes in a secret place only they knew. He was a Droyne Sport, flying a small ship alone. He told Mercedes of the fall of his Oytrip; of a gallant fight against an ancient foe and how brave humans joined the hopeless battle. They were from Omicron Division, which surprised Mercedes. Her friend told her secrets kept by his people, then quietly meditated himself to death. Realising the magnitude of the threat posed to the Imperium and her people, Mercedes reached out to someone who might know someone who was said to have the right contacts. She was directed to Research Station Gamma, where she would be given all the relevant data and a briefing by the senior field agent. When she arrived there was no field agent, no data and no briefing. She would have left – and would have managed it no matter what impediments the Director might have thrown in the way – but for the arrival of an Omicron Division ship and soon after it the Travellers.

ALGIN HOYWELLE

Algin Hoywelle is the only remaining member of the Research Station Gamma staff. Everyone else has left or been sent away. His is a lonely existence, largely ignored by the Director unless he wants something or chooses to berate Algin for not already having done whatever he just decided he needs. He is typical of the sort of people recruited to staff places like Gamma – technically skilled and discreet but not especially ambitious. He was honoured to be picked straight out of his robotics degree for a place at such a prestigious institution but when he arrived three years ago the situation was not what he had expected.

Hoywelle found Gamma understaffed and losing people at a rate of one or two every time a supply ship came through. A toxic, paranoid atmosphere was compounded by the Director's obvious contempt for his staff. Hoywelle's first task was to help Vicervis move into his new quarters, created on the top floor of the lab by turfing the senior remaining researchers and the administrative director out of their offices. This did not endear him to the other staff, although he really had no choice and was unaware of the staff dynamic at Gamma. By the time he was up to speed the facility was haemorrhaging personnel.

Leaving was an option but Hoywelle was on a probationary period and his career would suffer if he failed to complete it or received a bad report. He stayed on as everyone else left, becoming indispensable yet at the same time almost invisible. Vicervis expects robots to do whatever he wants but has never learned how to use them properly. He relies on his staff to convert half-formed demands into a coherent action plan for the robotics. Hoywelle has become very good at this, generally predicting what his boss will want and making sure Vicervis is inconvenienced as little as possible. There is no goodwill in this; Hoywelle loathes Vicervis and actively plots his downfall. Making him dependent is the first stage. After that he needs an excellent reference, which can be extorted if necessary. He will then leave and let the place fall apart behind him. There will be no need to actively sabotage the research; Vicervis will crash and burn on his own.

The plan is workable but Hoywelle is becoming impatient. He is upset at the way Vicervis treats the Chirpers – Hoywelle does not know the new arrivals are Droyne and thinks they are more of the same. He has considered confronting the Acting Director about his cruelty but is intimidated by the mercenaries who have taken up residence at the facility. Thus far, Hoywelle has stuck to his plan to quietly engineer his departure. However, the arrival of first Aish Nirkha and then Mercedes Karamaka have created new opportunities. He knows more about the running of the facility than anyone and will betray Vicervis in an instant if he can get away with it.

Hoywelle is not a bad person. Quite the opposite, in fact. He is a decent young man who is willing to work hard for a modest salary. Mistreatment and a feeling of being trapped have led to disaffection, which he carefully conceals. The Travellers will likely find him rather bland at first but if they treat him well he can become a staunch ally. Hoywelle does not have access to the lab decks or the containment spheres unless specifically granted by the Director but he does programme robots that can enter or operate in these areas. Vicervis has overlooked this important fact.

ALGIN HOYWELLE

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		Male		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	5	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	10	Admin 1, Electronics (computer) 2, Electronics (remote ops) 3
END	6	SOC	6	

THE FIRST RESORT MERCENARIES

First Resort calls itself a battalion-sized unit but it does not function as one. Personnel are scattered all over the sector in detachments ranging from squad- to platoon-size, with forces as large as a company occasionally put together. Even then, the force functions as a collection of teams rather than a well-organised military unit. Teams generally work well together and personnel are competent but First Resort is more paramilitary outfit than warfighting formation.

With a questionable reputation regarding ethics but a willingness to get the job done, First Resort has found itself in and out of the courts on many occasions. It was chosen by Omicron Division as a catspaw and has seen action on several occasions under circumstances quite different to what its personnel thought they were getting into. Omicron Division rightly considers the force as something of a blunt instrument.

The First Resort troopers are reasonably well-behaved at Gamma, mainly because they like getting generously paid by Omicron Division. They are a bit cavalier with the furnishings and might kick the worker robots about, but their behaviour is within acceptable limits most of the time. They are rough with the specimens they bring in but not deliberately cruel. Indeed, in many ways they are kinder to the Chirpers than Vicervis, inasmuch as they do only what is necessary to secure and contain them whereas he deliberately torments them. The mercenaries are not blameless here; they are complicit in Vicervis' unethical experiments and quite willing to be paid to provide more subjects.

The mercenaries are routinely sent out on long air/raft flights to the northern continent or to other parts of Vanejen and are of course operating illegally when doing so. Officially, they are extra security for the installation and have been granted what amounts to police powers in the immediate vicinity of Gamma, which explicitly includes the right to use lethal force to protect the installation. They operate covertly elsewhere.

Equipment is decent but not lavish; individuals have an advanced combat rifle or laser carbine, backed up by a sidearm of some kind. Heavy flak jackets and helmets are available but for most situations tough coveralls and thick gloves are more appropriate. The mercenaries are becoming skilled at wrangling various animals as well as Chirpers and spend a lot more time forcing subjects back into a containment area than behaving like military troops. They are professional enough to take reasonable risks and will not betray their employer lightly. This is more a matter of maintaining employability and avoiding retaliation by Omicron Division than loyalty to anyone outside the unit but the end result is the same. The mercenaries do not know what Omicron Division is; they simply know they are doing shady work for some Imperial intelligence agency and do not want to know any more than that.

Exactly how many mercenaries are at Gamma is up to the Referee. It is likely that 48 will have been assigned but this can be tailored to the Travellers.

FIRST RESORT MERCENARIES

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
—		—		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	8	INT	5	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	4	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 1, Survival 1
END	9	SOC	3	
WEAPONS		Advanced Combat Rifle (3D, Auto 3, Scope) or Laser Carbine (4D, Zero-G), Autopistol (3D-3)		
ARMOUR		Coveralls (+2) or Flak (+5), Psionic Shield Helmet		

THE SITUATION AT RESEARCH STATION GAMMA

Vicervis has been at Research Station Gamma since it was constructed and is the reason for its current situation. He should have been replaced or given a new superior to keep him in check but this was never considered a priority. He is loyal to the Imperium and unlikely to divulge secrets of his research to outsiders. Most of all he was judged likely to produce results. Administrators under pressure to justify their budgets found it convenient to overlook reports of irregularities if there was a prospect of a breakthrough that would justify all the expense of the sector's research stations.

The resources at Vicervis' disposal were considerable but more was always better. Omicron Division may or may not have been involved from the beginnings of the research station's career but by 1090 they were definitely in the loop and within a decade they were regularly sending their own projects to the facility. Most of these were minor or compartmentalised to the point where the researchers had no idea they were working on anything out of the ordinary. This did not always go that well; a batch of G482 creatures sent to the station for study somehow got loose, resulting in fatalities. The previous Director was among them, although everyone at the installation sincerely believes he died from natural causes. Omicron Division learned what they wanted to, albeit by an unexpected route, and actually gained from the incident.

Vicervis was more malleable than his predecessor and quite willing to engage in questionable experiments. His obsessiveness and instability may have been made worse by his encounter with a G482 but as far as Omicron Division was concerned Research Station Gamma became more useful under Vicervis. Omicron Division removed the G482 specimens and created a new project to study and perhaps utilise them but began sending items and information to Gamma. This assisted Vicervis' own projects as well as furthering those of Omicron Division.

Despite the fact that Vicervis was driving away members of the installation staff he seemed to be on the verge of important results. Exactly who was misleading whom is an open question but Vicervis' bold claims were taken at face value by those to whom he reported and if anything amplified when they briefed the great nobility of the region. Day-to-day issues at an obscure research station could be overlooked if they led to a breakthrough that would shift the strategic balance in the region. Cross-cutting agendas and wishful thinking led to the status quo being left alone for just a little longer, until matters reached the point where Vicervis and Omicron Division were using one another to further their own ends and the powers that be were fed whatever explanations seemed likely to be accepted.

One of the measures taken to assist Vicervis was the hiring of a squad from the First Resort mercenary group. Their main task was to obtain specimens from Chirper villages on Vanejen but in between expeditions they were to act as handlers and sometimes take part in behavioural experiments. This mostly meant poking Chirpers with stun prods or forcibly separating them ready for an experiment. It was easy work for good money but became boring after a while. The mercenaries increasingly became troublesome, although to date they have remained within tolerable limits to avoid losing their cushy jobs.

In the past few months the mercenaries have taken to making extended air/raft trips, ostensibly to explore and locate new and convenient sources of Chirper specimens. Vicervis has never questioned this explanation but the reality is that the mercenaries are visiting towns to enjoy whatever recreational opportunities might be found there. They are smart enough to stay away from the starport and other large cities but their behaviour has escalated over time to the point where the world government is becoming concerned about 'obvious offworlders' raising hell in small towns, then disappearing.

Overall, the situation has been gradually worsening at Gamma and with new elements in the mix matters are likely to come to a head. First, Mercedes Karamaka arrived with a request for information. She has made common cause with Omicron Division although neither really trusts the other, and was directed to Gamma to obtain research data. Mercedes went through the usual process with Vicervis; he was charming and gracious at first but soon lost interest in her. She has not revealed her long history and knowledge of the Ancients, which would most definitely pique his interest. Instead, she is posing as a researcher working for Omicron Division and he has decided she is a minor intellect with little to offer.

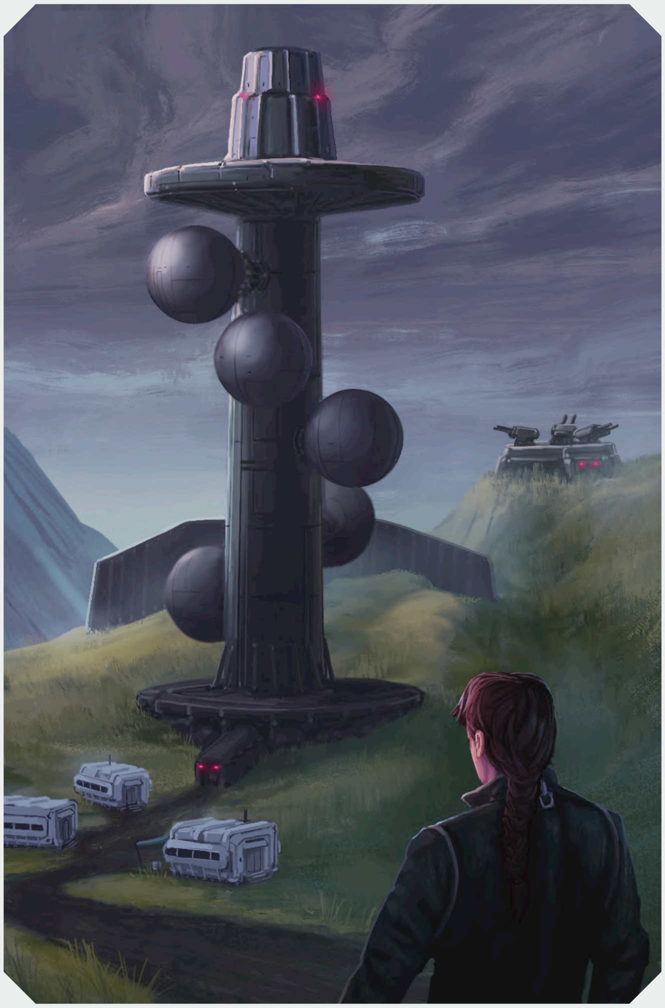
Mercedes has thus been rattling around in the research station, more or less ignored, whilst Vicervis supposedly puts together a data package for her. She is unhappy at the way the specimens are treated and wary of the mercenaries, but has not yet decided on a course of action. In the meantime she has become friendly with Hoywelle and is considering offering him a berth aboard her ship. However, she is also aware that she might be headed into danger of a sort that Hoywelle is not equipped to handle and that uprooting him from Gamma means he will end up living the sort of life she has had to. Mercedes has lost a lot of friends along the way and is reluctant to involve anyone else. She finds Aish Nirkha utterly detestable but is baffled as to why he is incarcerated. He is obviously a clueless fraud who spouts nonsense on the datanets for the sake of his own ego. Why Omicron Division would take him seriously enough to inflict him on the staff of a major research facility is beyond Mercedes' ken.

A while after Mercedes arrived, new specimens were brought to Gamma. These were the Andorian Droyne, who were dropped off in a brief visit by an Omicron vessel. Vicervis seemed quite excited at their arrival and has been even more reclusive than usual. Mercedes correctly suspects he is running tests on them using the handler robots and planning a comprehensive set of experiments. He has left Nirkha in his cell for days and is ignoring Mercedes, Hoywelle and the mercenaries.

Nirkha has experienced periods like this during his captivity. Vicervis sometimes treats him as an honoured guest, more or less with the run of the place, and asks questions that allow Nirkha to play the role of Captain of Knowledge to the fullest. On other occasions he is left in his cell, forgotten. He has been provided with access to a restricted part of the installation's computer network for entertainment and so that he can answer questions put to him by an algorithm Vicervis created. At present he is whiling away his time producing recorded lectures on various subjects – most of them different from the ones he has been set – and annotating the installation's database where he considers it to be wrong.

Even Nirkha's galaxy-class self-delusion can withstand his situation for only so long. His ego likes being important enough to be locked up and the fact that an Imperial research facility needs his input is also pleasing but he is increasingly desperate to be free again. In addition, his billions of devoted followers will be lost without their Captain of Knowledge. He will, with complete sincerity, ask the Travellers 'have the riots started yet?', referring to his absolute conviction that him being missing from the datanets will cause widespread unrest. He is not the sort to actually do anything and any escape plan he came up with would be questionable at best. He will, however, try to convince anyone who will listen that he should be released as soon as possible.

In short, the situation at Gamma is downright strange at present; a deranged director, undisciplined mercenaries, a deluded narcissist, an increasingly impatient Mercedes and four confused and miserable displaced Droyne. Into this potentially chaotic situation come the Travellers. They need information and might get more than they bargained for.



THE TRAVELLERS AT RESEARCH STATION GAMMA

Research Station Gamma is the crossroads of the campaign. Important information can be found here and events set in motion. The Travellers may not see all the possibilities despite clues and reminders, or they may decide not to pursue some of the opportunities. They might decide to take what they want by force but can get more out of their visit if they are diplomatic and stealthy.

The Travellers have come seeking information, notably about the Andorian genetic cache and why someone would want to exterminate it. They may also wish to find out more about their own uplift process and exactly what Omicron Division is doing at present. They will have to work for all of this; no-one is going to simply present them with answers. Indeed, without certain knowledge many of those involved will not realise there are questions to be asked:

- It is likely that nobody but the Travellers knows about their confrontation with Yaskoydray and Seven. Omicron Division still considers them to be low-importance persons of (slight) interest. That would change if word of their adventures got out. Mercedes knows more and will use that to her advantage. It is probable that she does not consider it wise to tell Omicron Division what she knows but may decide she has to depending on the Travellers' actions.
- It is likely that nobody at all knows about the uplift process the Travellers are undergoing and few will suspect such a thing is even possible. Vicervis would give anything to study someone who had experienced such a marvel – which might include dissection – and would certainly petition Omicron Division to detain the Travellers for him.
- Omicron Division – and the Imperial intelligence services – are very interested in whoever it was at Andor during the attack but they do not know it was the Travellers. If they did, no effort would be spared to capture and interrogate them.

These factors may be important. At present the Travellers enjoy a certain degree of anonymity, which combined with their increasing power places them in a position to get things done without too much opposition. Eventually the powers that be will figure out the Travellers are more important than they thought, which will force decisions to be made. The Imperial authorities are likely to want the Travellers under their control and may try to force them to obey. There is little chance of this working but being in direct opposition to the Third Imperium is a complication most Travellers will not want.

How the Travellers approach their time at Gamma is entirely up to them. A set of events will unfold, based upon the actions of others, but there is no cast-in-stone plot to follow. If the Travellers are smart and self-motivated the Referee can delay the events that follow the Travellers' arrival to give them time to write their own story. In short, Gamma is a set of opportunities for the Travellers to make use of if they wish. Other characters, particularly Mercedes, can be used to prompt the Travellers or remind them of goals they may have temporarily forgotten.

The motivations of the people involved are complex and may change as events unfold. However, the following will serve as a guideline:

Vicervis: Wants to complete his work. Anyone who might be useful is worth spending time on. Others are either obedient servants or a nuisance.
Hoywelle: Wants to honourably leave Gamma with his career intact. Resents Vicervis but not to the point of wanting to actively harm him. Intimidated by the mercenaries. Feels sorry for the specimens but will not take risks to help them.
Nirkha: Wants to leave Gamma and take his leadership of the entire Ancients Hunter community to new heights.
The Mercenaries: Bored and irritable but getting paid well, they just want to complete the assignment and take a long furlough on the proceeds.
Mercedes: Wants to take advantage of the situation to obtain information on various subjects but in particular the implications of what happened at Twilight's Peak and at the Oytrip of Vaykouh.

ARRIVAL

The Travellers may well plan their entry to Research Station Gamma before they arrive at Vanejen, perhaps intending to use the supply submarines to sneak into the facility. This is a viable approach and there are plenty of others. However, the Travellers may be surprised to learn they can just walk in through the front door. Shortly before they enter orbit over Vanejen their vessel receives a signal from the surface, by way of repeater satellite. If they are flying something that looks like a Droyne ship – which includes Ancients vessels – the signal is in Oynprith, the Droyne language. The inflection is not quite right and the idiom is wayward at times, suggesting a translator programme is in use. If their vessel seems more conventional, the signal is in Galanglic.

Either way, the signal originates from Research Station Gamma. Initially there is no video component, as the sender is not officially permitted to speak on behalf of the station. In fact, Mercedes is piggy-backing a signal using the station's comm system. Nobody else is aware of the new arrivals yet and she hopes to take advantage or forestall a disaster. Given the circumstances, a Droyne ship arriving at Gamma might well be coming to take back the captives by whatever means prove necessary. Mercedes thinks she could negotiate a deal and present it as a fait accompli to the Acting Director. A non-Droyne ship suggests a different situation but she would still rather be ahead of the game if she can.

The signal begins with a routine request for identification and statement of intentions. As soon as Mercedes realises who she is talking to her manner changes and she starts to sound more like a starport traffic controller.

'You are expected. Landing coordinates to follow; be advised of crosswinds and poor visibility at the landing site. The Director will be informed of your arrival and someone will meet you at the facility entrance. Please note that this is a secure facility and that lethal force may be used in its defence. Personal weapons are permitted to authorised personnel. Gamma traffic control out.'

This statement is accompanied by video of Mercedes sitting at a typical starship cabin-type console, bleary-eyed and slightly dishevelled as if she had just woken up – which in fact she has. That might alert the Travellers to the fact that there is more to the unexpected welcome than might be immediately apparent.

The signal from Gamma is followed by one from the downport, which simply confirms the Travellers' ship has orbital and planetary landing clearance. The authentication code string embedded in it is genuine but contains a few codes the Travellers might not have seen before. These are specific to Naval Intelligence and Omicron Division vessels, and translate to 'we acknowledge you are official and covert, and will not ask any more questions'. Normally this signal would be made in response to a transponder code sent out by the arriving ship but in this case it seems that the Travellers' vessel has been pre-authenticated.

What has happened is that after the Droyne specimens were delivered Mercedes set up a monitoring programme to use the installation's sensors and communications system. It would be obvious to anyone who cared to look but these functions have been running on automatic for months now with no oversight. She was not sure who she was expecting; perhaps a Droyne warfleet? Whatever happened she needed to be ready. With a bit of help from artefacts aboard her vessel, Mercedes' programme detected the Travellers' ship and woke her up. She is thinking on her feet right now, trying to figure out how to make use of the situation and get out of the station before everything goes wrong in a lethal fashion.

As the Travellers' ship makes its approach Mercedes attempts to inform the Acting Director of the situation… at least, the situation as she wants him to perceive it. As usual, he is not answering his comm. That might mean he is sleeping, or that he does not want to be troubled with mundane matters. Mercedes leaves him a message to the effect that associates of Omicron Division are arriving to consult with him and asks Hoywelle to go and meet the Travellers.

Assuming the Travellers actually land at the installation rather than finding some convoluted method of entry, they are guided down by a standard landing beacon with no further personal input. There are no ships on the pad, as Mercedes' vessel is secured in a hangar and the weather is typical for Gamma. Gusty winds carry swirling sleet and large waves crash on the cliffs at the western side of the island. There are no major problems with landing other than the wind.

Disembarking, the Travellers are greeted by a lone figure huddled into a parka, who introduces himself as Algin Hoywelle, 'Assistant Pretty-Much-Everything'. He suggests getting into the entry tunnel as soon as possible, for obvious reasons. Hoywelle will not comment on weapons carried by the Travellers but he would expect Omicron personnel to bring sidearms at most into the facility. Longarms will arouse his curiosity whilst battlefield weaponry will alarm him. However, strange things do happen at Gamma so Hoywelle tries to put aside his concerns as there is nothing he can do about the situation.

Hoywelle is under the impression the Travellers are agents of Omicron Division and has no reason to doubt this unless the Travellers give him one. This means as far as he is concerned they are some kind of scary intelligence agency people who should not be antagonised or questioned. On the other hand, he and they are on the same side and he has no reason to fear they will harm him. The presence of a lot of weapons might make him worry about other threats, however, and he may ask why the Travellers think they need all that weaponry.

During the trip into the facility, Hoywelle answers questions as far as he is able. Omicron Division agents should know a lot about the facility already, so basic questions about Gamma and its functions will seem strange or even suspicious. Hoywelle is not permitted to talk about the experiments or subjects and Omicron agents would know that. If the Travellers tread carefully they can avoid arousing suspicion but this does limit the sort of information they can obtain.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Mercedes sent Hoywelle to make the initial contact because she had some things to do, such as ensuring the Director believes the Travellers are from Omicron Division. In a properly run installation there would be presentation of credentials and verification of identity but Gamma has not been properly run for years. Mercedes is reasonably sure the Director will not think to question the visitors' identities and no-one else is authorised to do so. It may be some time before he even realises he has guests.

Mercedes meets the Travellers in the ground-level entry area and introduces herself as if the Travellers had never met her. She suggests to Hoywelle that the Director will probably want 'a bit of fanfare' by way of a formal greeting so maybe he can get ahead of the curve by setting up a drinks reception? Also, best to make sure the Director got the message; he is probably very busy. Hoywelle takes all this at face value and accepts Mercedes' offer to show the new arrivals around, assign them quarters and such like.

If the Travellers are carrying a lot of heavy weaponry, Mercedes suggests they secure it, either in the security annex or the quarters she will show them to. Unless, she asks dryly, they are expecting a war to break out in the next few minutes? She will fish for information throughout the whole interaction and attempt to brief the Travellers on what is going on without saying anything that could tip her hand. The internal security system records everything outside private quarters and whilst Mercedes is sure Vicervis will never look at it someone might. That could be a problem long after she has left Gamma.

Mercedes is not a psion, so telepathic Travellers may be able to get all the information they need in seconds. She still needs to say the words for the benefit of the cameras. Thus, after stashing weapons she gives the Travellers a quick tour of the two ground levels; she will insist on weapons being secured, other than sidearms if the Travellers really want to keep them, in compliance with the installation's regulations and her own aversion to having unpredictable people with massive ordnance nearby.

The tour takes in the entry point and the two experimentation areas, which are currently empty. Mercedes demonstrates the way the containment globes can be moved around, allowing her to inform the Travellers of their function in passing. Globes are secured, with only the Director able to access them, but anyone can change their position or bring one down to the experimentation areas unless they have been locked out of the system.

Mercedes mentions, again in passing as if the Travellers would know already, that she and the remaining staff – 'you've already met him' she adds with a wry chuckle – are housed in the lower part of the ground-level component along with what she refers to as the specimen collection team. She mentions the utility level deep underground and the submarine docks but omits to mention the containment spheres down there or their contents. Right now the Travellers have 'trusted visitor' access levels, which means they can operate most systems and go most places but they cannot enter sensitive areas such as containment spheres, labs and power or life support machinery. Nor can they use the comms system or operate the defence turrets and security robots will not obey them.

The tour gives Hoywelle a chance to see the Director and get thoroughly chewed out for not reminding him visitors were due. A reception is put together and at some point in the tour the Director extends his compliments by way of a nearby speaker and invites the Travellers to a drinks reception in his private lounge. If they do not think of it, Mercedes reminds the Travellers that a certain decorum is necessary here. 'Even Omicron Division big-shots like us have to dress nice and refrain from cussing,' she says dropping a last broad hint. The Travellers are expected to change into suitable clothing and divest themselves of weaponry before attending. The elevator has weapon scanners, Mercedes points out, and will not access the lab level with anyone aboard who is carrying an unauthorised weapon.

AN AWKWARD INTRODUCTION

When the Travellers are ready, they are conveyed up the elevator shaft to the lab deck and into the presence of the Acting Director himself. Hoywelle is present, essentially functioning as a waiter, and Mercedes is also invited. No-one else is in the lounge when the Travellers arrive. Vicervis is gracious and welcoming, personally handing out large glasses of expensive wines and spirits or dispensing the finest coffees from a device that looks like it could split atoms. Astute Travellers may note that at first he serves everyone but it quickly becomes apparent who he approves of and who he does not. Lesser mortals must fill their own glasses or have the long-suffering Hoywelle do it.

Vicervis does not have to be prompted for information. He is so complacent that it never occurs to him to wonder if the Travellers are cleared for what he is telling them, so talks about the great strides he is making in his research and how new specimens will accelerate the process even more. He has had some new insights courtesy of the guest Omicron Division brought him, he says, but wonders absently if it might not be safer or more expedient for him to be relocated. The research is at a critical phase, as the Travellers surely know. Psionic Travellers will realise Vicervis sincerely believes everything he is saying and may get advance warning of who the 'guest' is.

At this juncture, the 'guest' makes his appearance. Aish Nirkha, the Captain of Knowledge himself, sweeps into the chamber and loudly greets his 'great friends' – the Travellers – before asking what they are doing here. He has been allowed out of his cell mainly because Vicervis hopes the Travellers will take him away with them but he has just caused some potential awkwardness. The Travellers will need to provide some sort of explanation for how they are now (apparently) working for Omicron Division – or were they all along? Had they infiltrated Nirkha's conference to spy on him? If the Travellers fail to account for themselves the Captain of Knowledge might do it for them, spinning a narrative about how he is so important that Omicron Division's top agents have been trailing him.

SAYNYU OR OTHER DROYNE

If Saynyu is with the Travellers, or if any of them are Droyne, Vicervis will not react outwardly. However, Droyne make him uneasy and suspicious that they are going to try to liberate his specimens. He will still speak with them but is clearly uncomfortable. As soon as he gets the chance he will order his security system's automatic monitoring system to keep a close eye on the Droyne visitors. This does not change anything – it keeps a close eye on everyone – but he will feel better and soon become complacent again.

The reception is a chance to obtain information and perhaps also to roleplay a strange and awkward situation. Of everyone in the chamber, only Hoywelle is what he seems. Everyone else is pretending to be something they are not, or are deluded into thinking they really are. Vicervis has convinced himself he is on the cusp of galaxy-changing breakthroughs and will harangue the Travellers about how badly he needs more funding and some actually reliable staff.

The Travellers can learn a lot here, depending on who they interact with. Their cover story is weak but likely to be sustainable. The only person likely to be suspicious is Mercedes and she created the cover for them. Everyone else is too busy pursuing their own agenda to ask questions – they have jumped straight to figuring out what the Travellers can do for them and not questioned whether they are what they seem.

Vicervis works the room, chatting to each Traveller in turn. He wants to find the limits of their intellect and knowledge, and will quickly move on from anyone he finds uninteresting. 'Interesting' in this case means being able to discuss the topics of psionicology and life processes, or related fields. Space science and similar 'hard' subjects are beneath Vicervis' attention except where they touch on his obsession with interstellar telepathy. Vicervis can be rude and abrupt if he has discounted someone and will not allow anyone else to be the centre of attention.

Aish Nirkha holds forth to anyone he can corner about his latest 'revelation'. Apparently there is a method of interstellar communication which does work. Vicervis will not listen but the universe is not ready for it anyway. This time, the Captain of Knowledge is actually correct… mostly. He has figured out that in theory an object can be instantaneously teleported of great distances and could carry information. He does not know if teleportation is possible but he has decided it must be. He will expound this idea all evening, interspersed with broad hints that he should be released from Research Station Gamma.

Mercedes is unwilling to say much where the security system can hear her but will quietly suggest to some of the Travellers that she can show them 'something cool' when they get a moment. This will have to wait a little while, until Vicervis loses interest in his guests.

Hoywelle just wants to be somewhere else.

REVELATIONS ON THE BALCONY

Once the initial meet-and-greet has wound down, Mercedes takes the opportunity to tell the Travellers about the huge viewing window on the deck below and the seascape beyond. The window has ports that can be opened but for the full experience, she says, you have to go out on the balcony. Here she is referring to the air/raft landing area, which is accessed through the hospitality area.

Outside is… bracing… to say the least, and the view is much as expected – grey skies, grey sea and grey rocks. It is beautiful in a stark manner but not worth freezing for. After a few moments Mercedes tells the Travellers 'no microphones out here' and fills them in on the real situation. She has reliable information on the installation and the people in it, although the Travellers will have to choose whether to believe her or not. She wants their help in obtaining some information and perhaps rescuing the captive Droyne and Chirpers. What to do with the Droyne is a difficult question given their lack of a community will kill them soon, but perhaps the Travellers can think of something.

Mercedes has no more access to the facility's systems than the Travellers do and she can only enter the same places as them. The information she wants is sure to be in the main computer but she cannot access it without clearance. That can only be granted by Vicervis as far as Mercedes knows and whilst he was supposed to have done so he has kept fobbing her off with promises. She suspects he is up to something and does not want anyone poking around in the records.

Mercedes is partially correct. The research files are protected by layer upon layer of security. This could be cracked eventually by sufficiently advanced equipment – such as a shipboard computer built by the Ancients – but this would take considerable time. Access can only granted by the Director of the facility. Vicervis is Acting Director and therefore has the powers of the position – but the position itself is vacant. The process for installing a new Director is not secured to anything like the same level, which could be a way to bypass the overall security of the computer system.

One way to obtain the information Mercedes wants is to convince the system that one of the Travellers is the new Director and to grant access. There are other options, however. The most brute-force options would be to physically remove the bulk data storage archives and crack the security at leisure, or to coerce Vicervis into permitting full access. Less aggressive options include convincing the Acting Director that data is needed in order to complete some function or to unlock additional information he wants.

Mercedes mentions that Vicervis has asked her a lot of questions about the Droyne casteing process, which so far she has answered rather vaguely. She surmises that he is trying to prove a link between casteing and the development of psionic powers. There actually is one but Vicervis has only fragmentary hypotheses about how powers develop. He has also experimented with trying to caste adult Chirpers to see if they become Droyne. This is impossible but all Vicervis knows is that he has not yet achieved it. Further experiments are possible in the future.

Mercedes does not know about the uplift process the Travellers are experiencing but she may be able to see some physical changes since last she saw the Travellers. This gets her thinking about the casteing process and one of Vicervis' truly bizarre experiments. He has, he told her, attempted to replicate the Droyne casteing process with other species, including humans. As with Chirpers, he has not achieved anything but will not accept this means it is impossible.

If the Travellers take the hint, this may lead them to wonder if what they are experiencing is anything like the rapid changes undergone by immature Droyne after casteing. The short answer is yes; both are psionically induced processes governed by the subject's own latent psionic powers. The casteing ritual and the uplift both trigger this process, although in different ways. The fact that the Travellers' own minds are governing their uplift accounts for the way their dreams and visions tie in with the powers they are developing.

Mercedes also tells the Travellers what her friend told her. This related under Irthoyl's Story, on page 277. She now knows for certain that the Ancient Tsyamoykyo is intending to conquer Charted Space. She does not know if he can be stopped but plans to try. She knows where the Oytrip of Vaykouh is located and can give the Travellers the information they need to find it. She does not yet know where Tsyamoykyo's fortress is but the ruins of the Oytrip will presumably have clues. Once she finds it she plans to kick the door in and stab him in the face if that is what it takes to stop him. The mild way she says this belies her strength of intent. Trivialities like the fact that Tsyamoykyo is essentially a god and Mercedes is just a person do not concern her. She is sure Tsyamoykyo can be killed and intends to prove it by doing it. If the Travellers reveal they have participated in the destruction of others of his kind or that they are undergoing an uplift she will be encouraged, but is prepared to try on her own if necessary.

DEFEATING GAMMA'S SECURITY

Defeating or bypassing the security system has multiple benefits for the Travellers. It will give them access to the installation's entire scientific database and experimentation logs as well as allowing entry to the vault, the containment spheres and all other secure areas. The problem is that security clearance can only be granted from the main computer room by someone with Director level access.

Mercedes knows that Vicervis carries a master security key, which is in fact a card-like electronic device whose circuitry is dedicated to security algorithms. The card must be physically presented to a reader, making it impossible to spoof by duplicating emissions, and is supposed to be coded to a particular holder. Like many other functions Vicervis chose not to do this, as it is convenient for him to send Hoywelle to perform many routine tasks. This is one way the Travellers could obtain the card – if Vicervis comes to think of them as useful minions he may simply hand them the card and tell them what he wants. It would be a small matter to make a side trip during the assignment.

Two additional master keys are held in the vault. If the Travellers can obtain one they will have full access. Doing so requires getting into a chamber that has Director-level access only; a problem that can be solved with Vicervis' key or perhaps by other means. One option is to convince the system that one of the Travellers is the new station Director. This can be done from any of the installation's key locations – the security office, the director's office, the reactor and life support control positions, and the specimen reception area on the lab deck. Not all of these are accessible to the Travellers without Director-level clearance but the security and specimen reception areas can be entered by anyone with 'trusted visitor' level access which the Travellers have been granted.

The process of convincing the security system to accept a Traveller as the new Director requires some administrative skills but surprisingly little else. The Traveller will need to fill in a long and complex form to register their imaginary credentials, necessitating an Average (8+) Admin check. The system will only accept someone 'known' to it, which means that anyone who has already been put on the system by someone cleared to use it can simply declare they are the new Director. This is not how the system was supposed to operate of course but Gamma has been running in isolation under an ivory tower intellectual for a long time.

Once the process is complete the new Director should be issued with their security key from the vault. Vicervis will be notified so that he can present the key with all due ceremony. He will naturally refuse to do this, so from this point on the installation can be considered hostile unless the Travellers can somehow convince everyone they really do have the right to take over. A new 'Director' without a master security key cannot access the vault and other secure areas but can use or download the station's database and experimentation records.

As an alternative, it is possible to temporarily disable the electronic security on various locations including the vault and the reactor chamber. This requires a fair amount of preparation and is more a matter of confusing the system's inputs than altering the security settings or turning the system off. An attempt requires 2D minutes of preparation and an Average (8+) Electronics (computer) check. Each point of Effect grants one minute of confused and erratic behaviour during which locks and other physical systems will malfunction sufficiently that a Traveller can bypass them. The intrusion device stolen by Chiree (see page 162) will also make this possible.

Perhaps the easiest way past the security system is through Vicervis himself. He will not grant strangers access to secure areas or his experimental data but is liable to quickly forget the Travellers are strangers once he wants something. If the Travellers can present him with something to become fascinated by he will start ordering them around and might well hand them his master security key or even get them one of their own if it seems necessary to the task at hand. His key could also be stolen or taken from his cooling body. However they do it, the Travellers need a security key to have full access to the installation. Stealth, deception and violence are all options to get the one Vicervis has but ultimately the Travellers may be able to just ask for one if Vicervis is sufficiently distracted that he forgets this is supposed to be a secure installation. If the Travellers do not think of a way on their own, events after their arrival will present a suitable distraction.

SELF-EXPERIMENTATION

When the Travellers arrived they were routinely scanned and the results archived. Vicervis will not immediately look at these results – indeed, he may never take any interest in them. However, the results do show some anomalies that might alert the Travellers to possibilities at the research station. The most likely way the Travellers will become aware of all this is through Mercedes, who will notice they are undergoing changes and perhaps suggest they visit the lab to see if anything harmful is happening. If they think to ask any Droyne who has been in their company for more than a few days they will get a matter-of-fact answer which translates as ‘if you were Droyne I would think you were developing into your caste’.

The changes the Travellers are undergoing leave traces which can be detected by suitable equipment, and the specimen receiving area has the capacity to analyse the Travellers in detail. The Travellers may be alarmed to be offered options such as auto-dissection and testing to destruction but a suitable battery of tests can be selected by anyone with Medic or Science (biology) skill. The actual tests take about an hour, with results presented 2D hours later. The Travellers can expedite this process, shortening the analysis time by one hour per point of Effect on an Average (8+) Medic or Science (biology) check.

The raw data from the tests is comprehensive and requires significant additional work but the basics are obvious. The Travellers are undergoing some form of physical and mental metamorphosis. The closest analogy known to the station’s system is what happens to Droyne after casteing but the process by which the changes are produced is entirely unknown. Analysis of the raw data will lead to insights that will help the Travellers develop. This is discussed under Self-Discovery, starting on page 167.

If Vicervis discovers the Travellers are highly unusual, whether from actually looking at their scan data or from witnessing their self-analysis, he will start thinking of them as test subjects as much as people. He will try to place the Travellers in situations where he can obtain additional data. Typically this means conditions of stress or danger. He may invent tasks for them, or possibly incorporate the Travellers into his ongoing experiments. For example, he may decide to ‘accidentally’ lock the Travellers in a containment globe and alter the conditions, or lower it into the ground-level testing areas and open the doors, bringing the Travellers face to face with agitated Chirpers. The lab-equipped containment globe is his likely instrument for this experiment.

It is unlikely that Vicervis will try to directly act against the Travellers – he is not quite that complacent. However, deniable ‘accidents’ and ‘malfunctioning’ robots or systems can be used to prod the Travellers to see what they do. Vicervis’ moral compass is sufficiently damaged that he does not really know where the limits of acceptable behaviour lie and in any case the pursuit of knowledge is more important than the welfare of people he does not like very much.

THE CAPTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE

Aish Nirkha has been alternately locked in his cell and allowed free rein throughout most of the station. His periods of confinement are supposedly punishment for failing to provide information and ideas, although sometimes he is locked up simply because he is annoying. He has been released subject to a promise to behave himself and to answer questions in a meaningful fashion. His current goal is to convince the Travellers to take him with them when they leave and to this end he wants to befriend and manipulate them. His efforts are likely to be just as irritating as the last time the Travellers met him but this time he does have useful information.

As a result of his peculiar status as an often-ignored guest-prisoner Aish Nirkha knows more about the installation than Vicervis or anyone else suspects. He is aware that the Acting Director is unfit to be the leader of a facility like this and generally ignores the running of the place in favour of his experiments. Nirkha can point out the flaws in the security arrangements if anyone will listen to him. However, this information is the only bargaining chip he has and he wants to get away from Gamma. He will offer a little of what he knows and try to negotiate in return for more. If he becomes desperate enough he will volunteer everything he knows and a few things he has made up and just hope the Travellers rescue him. He is quite capable of convincing himself they need him.

Nirkha can be more than just an irritant if the Travellers make clever use of him. He might be a distraction for Vicervis or the mercenaries and it is just about possible he can be genuinely useful. This is likely to be in small ways, acting as an extra pair of hands or helping search an area. If the Travellers make a deal with him he is likely to honour it as he has nothing to gain from messing the Travellers around.

THE ANDORIAN DROYNE

The four Droyne imprisoned at Gamma are lost, frightened and bereft of leadership. They have little initiative of their own as they would normally work at simple tasks until a Leader reassigned them. They are listless and might seem resigned to their fate but in addition they are extremely frightened and may react in an unpredictable manner. None of the four have any idea where they are, nor any plans. They were kept in low berths for the journey to Gamma and awakened just after arrival. To them it has only been a few days since the destruction of their community. Once they become certain that no-one is going to rescue them and provide leadership they will lose their remaining will to live.

These Droyne are precious, in that they have the god-gene that created Yaskoydray and the other Ancients. They are also frightened people who are victims of savage violence. Saving them means more than getting them out of Gamma, although that would be a start. A physical rescue could be accomplished in all manner of ways but the main obstruction is the Droyne themselves. They take orders from a Leader and there are none present. Saynyu, if he is present, could be a temporary solution. As a Sport he conveys orders from the Leaders on a regular basis. He is struggling to adapt to life without his Oytrip and would be comforted by having others of his kind. He cannot lead them in the way a true Leader would but can pass on the commands of someone else as if they came from a Leader. To the captive Droyne this illusion of normalcy represents a lifeline that could keep them sane and active long enough to come up with a longer-term solution. It might be possible to introduce the Droyne to a new community or to take them home to Andor. Their own community is gone but they could join another. Their special genetic heritage might be important to others but they are just humble Droyne who need others of their kind.

It might be possible to salvage the god-gene heritage from these four individuals. One option might be to clone them and perform a casteing ritual when the clones are old enough. There is no way to say what the long-term results of such a process might be. In the shorter term the Travellers might be able to learn a lot about the genetic heritage of these Droyne by studying them without causing harm but that requires keeping them alive. Physically this presents no challenge but the mental or spiritual welfare of the Droyne is another matter. There is a little information about them in the facility's data banks; samples of their tissue were taken whilst they were in transit and have been given a preliminary analysis. This includes a great deal of genetic code information and the conclusion that these Droyne have a slightly different genetic makeup to the standard samples on file. There has been no time for anything further.

There are four captive Droyne; three Workers and a Technician. Their names are Iker, Ssosk, Yarmoyrtmi and Eayrk. They come from a low-tech agricultural village on Andor. Although they are broadly familiar with technological devices they do not know how to operate most of the systems they will encounter at Gamma. They are peaceable individuals who want only to work for the common good of their community.

IKER, SSOSK, YARMOYRTMI, DROYNE WORKERS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	—	—

TRAITS	Close Combat Aversion, Droyne Claws

				SKILLS
STR	8	INT	4	Caste (Worker) 2, Survival 1
DEX	6	EDU	3	
END	9	PSI	5	

EAYRK, DROYNE TECHNICIAN

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	—	—

TRAITS	Close Combat Aversion, Droyne Claws

				SKILLS
STR	5	INT	7	Caste (Technician) 2, Mechanic 1
DEX	8	EDU	5	
END	7	PSI	6	

If the Travellers are self-motivated and have plans the Referee should allow them a reasonable amount of time to do whatever they want. Mercedes hopes to get copies of the installation's data and will work with the Travellers to this end, accommodating whatever additional plans they have as best they can. Matters will begin to move beyond the Travellers' control after a while, although there is no reason why they cannot carry out their plans against the backdrop of the emerging crisis.

RETURN OF THE MERCENARIES

Some of the First Resort mercenaries have been away 'scouting new sample collection areas' – their current euphemism for amusing themselves in a backwater town – and have just returned. They have collected two specimens along the way in order to maintain the illusion they are doing their jobs. One of the Chirpers is wounded and near death, whilst the other is frightened and roughed-up but overall healthy. The mercenaries are capable of wrangling the newcomers out of the containment cage in the air/raft they are using and into the lower level of the installation but they do not seem to be capable of doing it in a humane manner.

If the Travellers ignore this the wounded Chirper dies and the other is left alone in one of the experimentation areas until Vicervis is ready to begin studying its reaction to various stimuli. There is a fair amount of routine data-logging to be done regarding the origins of the specimens and their condition before experimentation can begin, and Vicervis is likely to want to start with an autopsy of the recently deceased specimen. For their part the mercenaries take little notice of the Travellers other than a routine 'who's-these-guys?' Their assumption is that the Travellers are just another group of clients or operatives or whatever visiting the installation. The mercenaries have no real reason to be suspicious, so unless things have already turned hostile they will generally ignore the Travellers.

If the Travellers offer to help, their assistance is accepted without comment. They may be able to save the life of the injured Chirper if they can get him to the lab and deal with his wounds. Vicervis will not object to that as it means one more live subject and the mercenaries do not care. The Travellers might be able to make use of the situation to steal Vicervis' security key or to take other actions under cover of stabilising the new arrivals. There are moral questions to be asked at this point.

VICERVIS AND HIS EXPERIMENTS

The Travellers will have to decide sooner or later where they stand on the subject of Vicervis experimenting on sentient people. At first they will be able to tiptoe around the subject or blatantly ignore it but after a while Vicervis will ask them to assist with an experiment. He is sure that Droyne and Chirpers are the same species and that observing them interact will reveal new insights. His plan is to move the captive Droyne into the experimentation area and then lower a containment globe in and drive the Chirpers out of it. He does not know what to expect, so everyone is expected to be on high alert.

The Travellers will not be briefed on what is going on, although they might be given jobs to do or invited to add their insight to the observations about to be made. The First Resort mercenaries, assisted by handler robots, will manhandle the pathetic and unresisting Droyne through the facility to the experimentation area, whilst Vicervis commands the containment globe in which Chiree is – supposedly – confined to lower into the same area. If the Travellers intervene or prevent the experiment events will unfold according to their actions, but either way there is a problem – Chiree is not in the containment globe.

Chiree has got out again and could be anywhere in the installation or even elsewhere on the islet. He is clever and cunning, and able to make himself invisible. Unfortunately for him Vicervis and his staff are wise to his ability and searchers will don psionic shield helmets or use robots and cameras. Vicervis asks – or maybe orders – the Travellers to help find him and grants them access to all containment spheres. This is an opportunity to investigate the contents of the spheres or perhaps progress with plans to steal the installation's data.

Eventually a triumphant mercenary announces the Chirper has been caught. After a few moments it becomes clear this is not Chiree – the others are out too! A furious Vicervis orders that everything – he does not even refer to the Droyne as people at this point – be caught, corralled or otherwise brought under control, and retreats to his office to watch proceedings on the monitors. This assumes the Travellers are not already at odds with the station staff. Depending on the actions of the Travellers thus far they may be haring around the station chasing Chirpers, fighting the mercenaries whilst specimens flee in terror, or anything in between.

THE INTRUSION DEVICE

The device was made with Ancients technology for use by their agents. It has the ability to act as an interface between the mind of a user and an electronic system. It is difficult to use precisely and extremely tiring to operate, but once the user has mentally explored the nearby devices they will have a three-dimensional map of the systems nearby. Basic devices such as switches and simple locks can be controlled directly, requiring only a thought and a Major Action to operate. More complex devices cannot be fully controlled but can be disrupted. This is enough to make a security system fail for a few minutes or a robot to act erratically.

The range of the device depends on the user's telepathic ability. It detects and can control devices within 1D metres per point of Effect on an Average (8+) Telepathy check. Chiree's simple intellect cannot make much use of the device, other than to perform the psionic equivalent of fiddling with buttons and switches, but the mind currently controlling him can use him as a bridge to access the device. The Travellers may explore uses of this device, in which case they find it allows them to psionically use whatever the relevant skills they have to interact remotely with electronic devices. It will not work on advanced Ancients technology however. A skilled user could walk through a secure facility guided by a map of every concealed electronic system in the place, disrupting cameras and locks as they went without touching anything.

The Referee must adjudicate the actions of the Travellers according to the motivations of other characters and common sense. Chiree and the others will still get loose even if the Travellers are not involved with the experiment. The reasons for containment failure will soon become apparent.

CHIREE AND THE INTRUSION DEVICE

Chiree the Chirper has a talent for escaping the confinement globes which Vicervis attributes to 'some kind of animal cunning and that talent for hiding those things have'. He now knows the 'hiding talent' is psionic and has taken steps to ensure his personnel have protection against it or can use secondary measures such as cameras and robots. What he does not know is how comprehensively Chiree investigated the facility the first time he got out, and what he found.

Chiree was frightened but his fellows needed him so he looked for useful things. Most turned out to be trivial and the gun he stole was a liability more than an asset. However, by chance he obtained the tool that would facilitate his escape. Daringly following Vicervis into the vault, Chiree had a few moments to choose something to grab. He did so and fled quickly. He was not caught for several hours, during which time he hid the various items he had taken. Most were found and the majority of those overlooked were unimportant. One, however, was not.

The device resembled a short cylinder of silvery metal when inert, and had defied analysis thus far. Since Vicervis and the other researchers did not have the capability to trigger psionic devices it would not respond to them. Perhaps a piece of building material, they concluded, and put it on a shelf. Chiree did not know what it was but it drew his hand in the vault and he stashed it in a vent before being caught. Later, as the containment globe was moved around it would pass close to the place of concealment. Chiree could sense it and somehow knew that it could interface with the globe's systems. Including the door.

Chiree has used the device to escape several times since, and thus far the installation staff have not realised his escapes have always been when the globe he occupied was close to a certain point in the shaft. He has always been recaptured within a few hours and has been moved between globes in case he is exploiting a fault the system cannot detect. Thus far, Chiree has not been able to achieve anything meaningful in his escapes. The time he got outside the facility was a bust; he had to allow himself to be found in order to avoid freezing to death. This time, however, something was different.

This time, as Chiree activated the device his consciousness was overwhelmed by a powerful mind. Cold and frightening, it drew from him everything he knew and would have cast him aside but for the device. Chiree sensed a change of purpose, a decision to act, and saw the exciting secrets revealed by the alien mind. Among these was a way to free his kin… and disable the fail-safes on the submersible dock gates.

Chiree made his escape and retrieved what he now knew to be an intrusion device from its hiding place. He made his furtive way to a hidden place in the research station and placed the device close to a backup server. Then he fell into a deep trance-like state in which he acts as a living interface between the foreign mind and the device. He does not really understand what it is telling him to do, and some of his actions are contradictory or entirely random. That does not matter; the alien mind has what it wants – access to the installation's underwater components.

BREACH!

As the situation becomes increasingly chaotic, a string of error messages is initially overlooked. It is not until lights start to flicker and doors open at random that it becomes apparent something is happening to the research station's automated systems. If anyone is in a position to check it seems that localised failures are occurring randomly throughout the installation and being quickly remedied. The overall effect is nuisance and disruption, with occasionally more serious problems such as the failure of containment globe lockout systems. This is how Chiree and his fellows got out this time.

There is a pattern to what is happening, although it is complex and will take some spotting. The installation is under a system-wide cyber-attack which is seeking any weakness to break into the security software. Most of the failures are what amounts to distractions, drawing a response from the security system intended to use up resources and weaken the overall protection. The attacks are not all that sophisticated, however. It is as if someone was just selecting components of the facility to attack at random or even just playing with the controls.

The attacks are originating from a backup server chamber which would normally be sealed. The Referee should decide where it is; somewhere likely to be overlooked in a search or at least not close to where the majority of the research station's personnel are. There is something else; internal sensors are going berserk throughout Gamma but there are more failures in the area around the submarine dock than anywhere else. The pattern is lost in the generally random alerts being thrown up by the installation's security system. A quick appraisal of the situation suggests there is no danger of catastrophic failure and critical systems such as power and the main elevator can be isolated and placed on a limited-function basis.

The instigator of all this chaos is Chiree, although he is not the ultimate source. If someone finds and removes him from proximity to the intrusion device he will recover from the trance, although he will be groggy and confused for several minutes. The alien mind using Chiree will try to take over anyone else in the area but it needs someone with just little enough psionic power to be able to interface with the device whilst not managing to resist the compulsion to do so. Anyone without at least basic psionic abilities is no use and most psions will be able to resist the attack. Chirpers are ideal, and of course there are others running loose in the station that can be directed to the device's location.

The security monitoring system in the submarine docks and corridors leading from them have gone blank or show intermittent patchy images. These are disturbing. The corridors are flooded, indicating that the dock outer gates are open and the airlocks have failed, and along them are moving strange creatures. They consist of a central mass surrounded by tentacles or pseudopodia and can swim at some speed. When they reach a dry area they slow down but keep moving. They proceed with silent intent into the facility, headed for the lower utility area and presumably the main parts of the station.

The creatures are hostile and powerful. They were covertly landed in the sea near the installation some days ago and have been observing Gamma since. Their mission is simple – find and destroy the surviving Andorian Drone. These are biological weapons, created by an even more extreme version of the same process that produced G482. They are cunning at an animal level and possess basic telepathic abilities. Had they not found a way in through the submarine bays they would have attacked overland; indeed, if the Travellers consult the external cameras they will find that other creatures of the same type are lurching across the islet from the eastern side.

The creatures have a simple imperative to kill everything in Research Station Gamma. They are particularly attracted to Droyne and similar beings, and to anyone with psionic powers. The creatures have a sensitivity to psionics and a life-sensing ability similar to that provided by the Awareness ability, but they are not really intelligent. They are being controlled by a larger being which remains in deep water offshore.

These are creations of Tsyamoykyo, intended for heavy assault of fortified installations, and this is not just an assassination attempt – it is a field test. A ship containing some of his servitors is in a distant orbit, monitoring the situation psionically by way of a link with the controlling creature. If Vicervis knew of this he would take it as proof that interplanetary telepathy – at the very least – is possible. However, he is more likely to be trying to stay alive like everyone else.

There are two groups of the creatures, which can be termed 'assault masses'. The first is already in the research station and moving towards the central elevator shaft. The other, larger, group is travelling overland. If this group reaches the research station its members will seek a way in. They will be able to breach even heavy security doors eventually using their telekinetic abilities, and some will set about this task. Others explore the exterior of the facility seeking another way in. They are capable of climbing its smooth outer services and will eventually reach the lab decks where they make their way along the underside and begin probing for weak points. They will breach the observation deck and any other windows they find, however this will require a few minutes. Anyone on the other side of a clear area sees the suckers on the underside of the mass and on its pseudopodia pulse and squeeze to grip and move it, and to crack whatever it clings to. They will also feel waves of telekinetic force emanating from the centre of the mass.

The masses have no plan beyond getting inside and killing everyone starting with the Droyne. They are relentless and indefatigable. If the Travellers and anyone else in the facility do not stop them or escape, the masses will eventually breach any hiding place. They can sense life despite psionic shielding and similar measures, but it is still possible to confuse or deceive them. False heat signatures will work, as might psionic stealth or equipment that conceals a person's thermal signature. The masses detect heat but do not have optical senses as such. Instead they navigate by means of a telekinetic 'rumble' which can be used to sense the layout of an area using vibrations through solids and reflected sound from surfaces the mass is not in contact with. Detection range is about 10 metres for vibrations, 25 metres for thermal imaging and up to 50 metres for life sensing, although this is vague and does not indicate a path to the target. A mass might get itself into difficulties by detecting life in a given direction but being unable to detect obstacles or traps in its path.

Masses outside the facility can be engaged with whatever weapons are available, including the islet's aerospace defence turrets. The plasma gun will damage but not destroy the shaft of the facility and might be used as a brute-force method of clearing some of the masses. It will breach the lab deck on a direct hit but would have to be reprogrammed to remove its self-targeting lockout. Travellers might also impede or eliminate the masses by weapons fire whilst flying an air/raft or a grav belt, or daringly dangling out of an inspection hatch or window. Those inside can also be tackled with personal weapons and other devices such as improvised bombs, although damage to the installation is likely. The mercenaries will do their best as will the security robots but this is a threat that was never foreseen. The creatures are terrifying in aspect; sufficiently so that seasoned mercenaries may flee at first sight of them.

Once the creatures attack, the situation becomes one of survival. Escape is always an option but some way must be found to clear the masses away so that ships can be accessed. The Travellers might decide on a straight elimination, a quick exit, or an attempt to break into the installation's secure data files under cover of the attack. How they deal with the situation is very much up to them but they need to do something fast. The Referee should emphasise the horrific nature of the creatures and the atmosphere of panic they inspire. This is a harbinger of things to come if Tsyamoykyo reaches Imperial space.

AFTER GAMMA

There may be little left after the attack on Research Station Gamma. Mercedes, assuming she survives, can fill the Travellers in on the location of the Oytrip of Vaykouh and the possibility it may hold the key to defeating Tsyamoykyo. The Oytrip is located on the remote world of Braudel, in the Trojan Reach. The planet is inhabited by humans, who probably do not suspect the existence of the hidden Droyne community. She will meet the Travellers there, after she has taken the surviving Droyne to a place of safety.

If Mercedes is dead, her ship's automated systems will convey the same information to the Travellers' vessel. They will have to decide what to do with the Droyne themselves. There are also the other survivors, if any, to consider. The Travellers might decide to hang around for a while, perhaps using the labs, but at some point assistance is going to arrive from the starport and, some time after that, the official investigation will begin. It would be simplest to be on their way before that happens.

REFEREE'S NOTES

The situation at Gamma starts out strange and becomes deadly. In the interim the Travellers have multiple opportunities to discover important information. In order for the campaign to progress they need to learn about the Oytrip of Vaykouh. The default conduit for this information is Mercedes, who will volunteer it, or a download from her ship if she is not in a condition to do so. If the Travellers have missed this important plot point they will need a prod from the Referee. See Signposts, starting on page 171, for ways the Travellers might be put on the right track.

Other information is not necessary to the plot of the campaign but will be very useful to the Travellers. Research Station Gamma is an opportunity to find out more about the uplift process and to establish the practice of experimenting and developing their powers. The Travellers might get this idea themselves – they are in a research station, after all – but the Referee can provide hints through one or more of the characters the Travellers interact with. Mercedes notices the Travellers are different to when she previously met them; she might suggest they investigate this with a few basic readings in the lab, leading to the realisation that further research is necessary. If the Travellers take someone from the station with them – Hoywelle perhaps – after they leave that individual might make a similar suggestion.

Mercedes is also a good source for common-sense advice about how to proceed. If the Travellers have not yet grasped the implications of their situation she can point out that their changing appearance and possession of Ancients devices will pique the interest of the Imperial authorities. The Travellers might get around that by obtaining – or forging – identification and documents that request cooperation or at least a lack of interference. Omicron Division might a source of these, or a suitable cover if the Travellers want to falsify their documentation. An alternative is to stay off the beaten path and avoid potentially troublesome contacts. Mercedes herself uses a nondescript ship and regular changes of identity, which mostly works, but the Travellers might stand out a bit too much for that.

Other people at the installation can be useful if the Travellers let them. Annoying as he is, Aish Nirkha's wild ideas can be used to toss the Travellers the occasional useful hint. One example is the teleportation-communicator idea. Nirkha is actually right that this is possible and by ignoring all thought of the practical difficulties he has come up with a workable method of interstellar communication. If the Travellers are inspired to try it out using the devices in one of the containment globes they will discover the paired teleporters are set up to send a message-bearing sphere between them wherever they are. The Travellers may find a practical use for this but at the least it gives them an explanation of how Tsyamoykyo was able to detect the awakening of the base on Lydia. There is also an element of foreshadowing here; interstellar teleportation will be used as the campaign reaches its finale.

Vicervis, if handled right, could also provide useful insight into matters relating to teleportation, psionics and the development of Chirpers. He is sure that Chirpers are related to Droyne and hypothesises that a change has undergone for Droyne to develop from immature Chirpers/Potential-Droyne. In this he is broadly correct and his information suggests that the rapid development of Droyne after casteing is related somehow to their psionic abilities.

Travellers who bull through Gamma and grab what they want may miss out on some of these opportunities. This will not affect the development of the campaign storyline so long as they sooner or later find out about the Oytrip of Vaykouh and the threat posed by Tsyamoykyo to Charted Space.

THE ASSAULT MASSES

Assault masses are essentially an amorphous blob of flesh containing dispersed neural and sensory organs, digestive system and the like. They are composed of similar tissue to G482, partially resistant to energy and impaling type weapons, as well as blunt force. The best way to destroy these creatures is to cut them apart or apply so much energy they are vapourised. Telepathic assault does not work on such limited intellects, although psionically induced effects such as pyrokinesis are as effective as their mundane counterparts.

The masses attack at distance with a telekinetic rip, essentially trying to pull objects and people apart. Psionic shields and armour are equally ineffective against this attack, which delivers D3 dice of damage if successful. To affect a target the mass must pass an Average (8+) check with no DMs for its own PSI or skill. The target's Telekinesis skill is used as a negative DM if they have it.

Close-range attacks use the creature's tentacles, which can bash for 3D damage or grab the target with an equivalent STR 15. A grab does no damage at the time but delivers 1D damage the next round with Protection counting as half value. Damage increases by 1D each round until it reaches 4D. After this the mass may continue to hold and/or crush and will apply its telekinetic attack as well.

Animal	**Hits**	**Speed**
Assault Mass	60	4m
Skills	Melee (natural) 1, Recon 1	
Attacks	Tentacle (3D or grab), Telekinetic Rip (D3D)	
Traits	Armour (+6), Large (+3)	
Behaviour	Special	

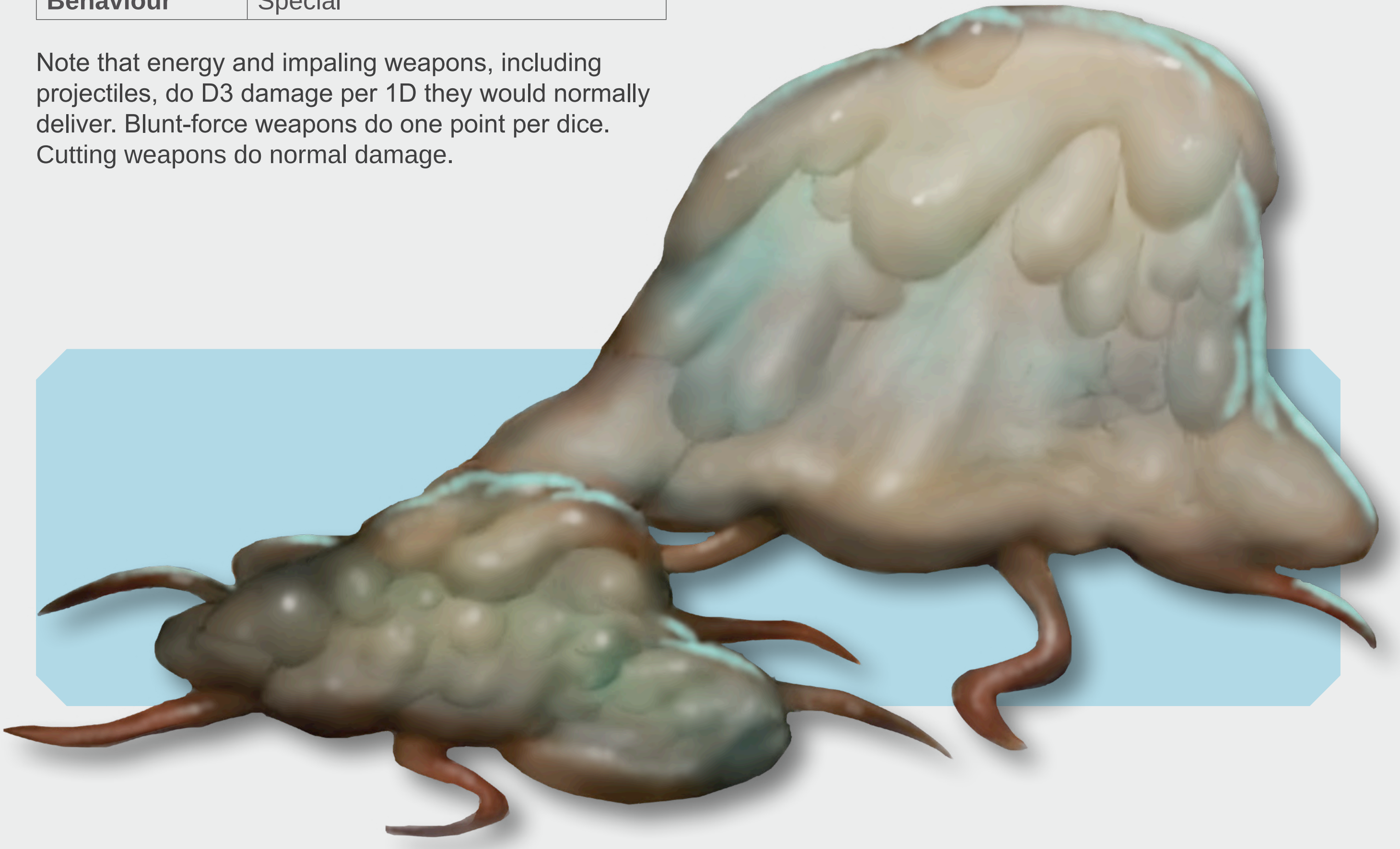
Note that energy and impaling weapons, including projectiles, do D3 damage per 1D they would normally deliver. Blunt-force weapons do one point per dice. Cutting weapons do normal damage.

THE CONTROL MASS

A larger version of the assault masses is lurking in the deep water off the shore. If its minions are killed it will retreat, possibly attacking coastal towns or submarines elsewhere on the planet. It is too big to come far onto land or enter a facility like Gamma. Its characteristics are broadly similar to the assault masses, although it is slightly more intelligent.

Animal	**Hits**	**Speed**
Control Mass	300	8m in water
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 2	
Attacks	Tentacle (10D or grab), Telekinetic Rip (1Dx1D)	
Traits	Armour (+24), Large (+6)	
Behaviour	Special	

Note that energy and impaling weapons, including projectiles, do D3 damage per 1D they would normally deliver. Blunt-force weapons do one point per dice. Cutting weapons do normal damage.



SELF-DISCOVERY

The Travellers have by this point undergone two uplift stages and may be beginning to understand the process. The more they learn, the better chance they have to guiding their development. The labs at Research Station Gamma offer a chance to obtain detailed information on the changes their bodies and minds are going through, and if they thought to avail themselves of the opportunity the Travellers will be able to enhance their understanding. If they do not choose to do some research, the process will continue anyway. It may catch them by surprise and they will be less able to guide their own development.

From this point on, the Referee needs to track the research and experimentation done by the Travellers. This is not complex. They are assigned a Revelation Index (RI) which begins at 0. Certain events in the campaign will provide opportunities for greater understanding of the uplift process and might give the Travellers the ability to guide it. Research and practice will also unlock additional powers. The Travellers may choose whether they develop as a group or as individuals. If working as a group, all members get the same increase in RI for each event or research project they take part in. If they prefer to work as individuals, each rolls separately for their own increase.

RI points can be used to trigger uplift events. Gaining the next level in any path the Traveller already has at level 1 or higher costs five times the new level. Gaining a new path at level 1 costs 10 RI points. These are deducted immediately from the Traveller's pool of points.

RI Costs

Advance	Cost	Total Cost
Gain a new path at level 1	10	10
Level 2	10	20
Level 3	15	35
Level 4	20	55
Level 5	25	80
Level 6	30	110

The Travellers are more than likely already at level 2 in one path, so progressing all the way to level 6 will cost 90 RI points. One Traveller might do this whilst another gains four additional paths at level 1 – costing 40 RI points – and advancing one of them to level 3. This Traveller has spent 65 RI and has 25 left over which can be spent at any time.

Once RI points are spent an uplift event is triggered. This will take place over 2D days, halved if the Traveller rests up and undertakes minimal activities. Plotting a jump then kicking back for a week is the simplest solution. The uplift cycle is always unpleasant, with headaches and odd pains here and there, and rapid physical changes require the consumption of a large amount of protein. Travellers on the more physical paths may need to replace their wardrobe as they gain bulk, longer limbs, or other changes to their body proportions.

The Travellers may undergo quite serious physical changes and may no longer resemble an average member of their species. By default, each time a Traveller undergoes an uplift event, even a purely mental one, they gain characteristics differing from their original species. Roll 2D on the Physical Changes table to see what level of change occurs. Additional RI points can be spent to create a DM on the chart, minimising changes, if Travellers want to retain their original appearance. Most changes are 'alien' looking, such as eye shape, facial bone structure or claw-like fingernails. Extreme changes will affect joint function and may result in vestigial characteristics like the formation of tiny wings. Travellers may realise they are gaining Droyne physical characteristics.

The Travellers may not care about these changes and indeed may revel in their new appearance. Given the cosmopolitan nature of interstellar society most people they meet will take them at face value, perhaps assuming they are members of a Minor Race from far away. The main problem the Travellers will encounter is that they no longer resemble the people on their official identification and qualification certification.

Travellers can guide the physical changes to some extent. In addition to using RI on the Physical Changes table, they can include changes in an uplift cycle or trigger a physical change. The former costs D3 extra RI whilst a deliberate alteration costs D3+3 RI and takes 1D days to complete. When the process is complete the Traveller will have a new physical form of the same mass and general shape. This can be used to remove physical alterations, gain new ones, change gender and so forth but a complete rebuild – turning from a Vargr into a Hiver, for example – is at present beyond the Travellers' capabilities. They will be recognisable as the same person to someone who knew them before but may be significantly taller or shorter so long as mass remains the same.

The Travellers are going beyond their original species and it shows. If they want to give themselves minor useful characteristics like a dewclaw or exceptional good looks, they can do so. Major specific alterations such as a retractable claw capable of ripping metal would require a significant effort requiring 2D RI points. How much the Travellers change, and how far down the uplift path they go, depends very much on the amount of effort they put in. It is expected that the Travellers will gain about 100 RI in the remainder of the campaign; enough to master one path or develop a broad base of abilities. Those who develop further are free to do so – they are becoming minor gods and this campaign is not going to limit them.

PURSUING REVELATION

The Travellers can practice with their powers and try to develop them as they head towards their goals. This is represented by a research project. Each time the Travellers want to embark on a project they must outline what they are doing and why they think it might produce results. Each project must be different, although variations on the same theme are acceptable. One project might involve comparing their new genetic code to a version from before the last uplift, or trying to figure out how changes experienced by one Traveller corelate to those experienced by another. They might try sensory deprivation, fasting and meditating, scientifically-planned parties, playing golf, sleep deprivation, electric shocks, behaving weirdly in public and seeing what people do… almost anything might yield an insight. The Travellers are, in short, off the map here.

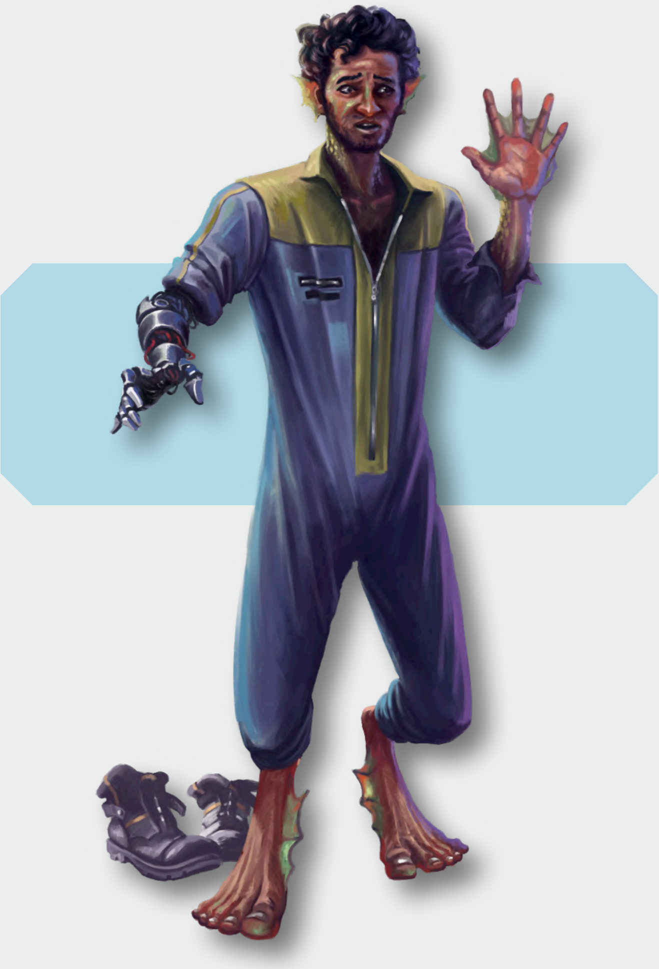
Physical Changes

2D+ DMs	Result
2–4	Major changes – wings, claws, joints displaced several centimetres (such as elbows too far along the arm), scaly skin or other major and obvious physical changes.
5–7	Minor changes – slight alterations to facial bone structure, finger length and the like – or changes that can easily be concealed such as vestigial wings.
8–10	Trivial changes – very slight alterations of bone structure, body mass distribution and the like which are likely to go unnoticed much of the time.
11+	No changes.

A research project takes 2D days of significant effort and cannot begin until the previous uplift event has run its course. At the end of the project the Travellers must make an Average (8+) Investigate or Science check, although a case could be made for another skill if relevant. As noted earlier, Travellers can work together and take the same result, or independently. If they work together, plausible task chains may be used. A group effort produces 2D RI plus the Effect of the check. A solo effort produces 1D+8 plus Effect but task chains cannot be used.

Some incidents and specific actions will also provide RI points. The Travellers' actions at Research Station Gamma may have already garnered them a significant amount, although they will need a few days to go over the data and figure out the implications.

Other actions will lead to an automatic award of RI points if the Travellers think to carry them out. This may require visiting places along the way or making side trips to obtain information. If the Travellers come up with something inventive the Referee should let them try and reward their efforts appropriately.



MAXIMISING UPLIFT

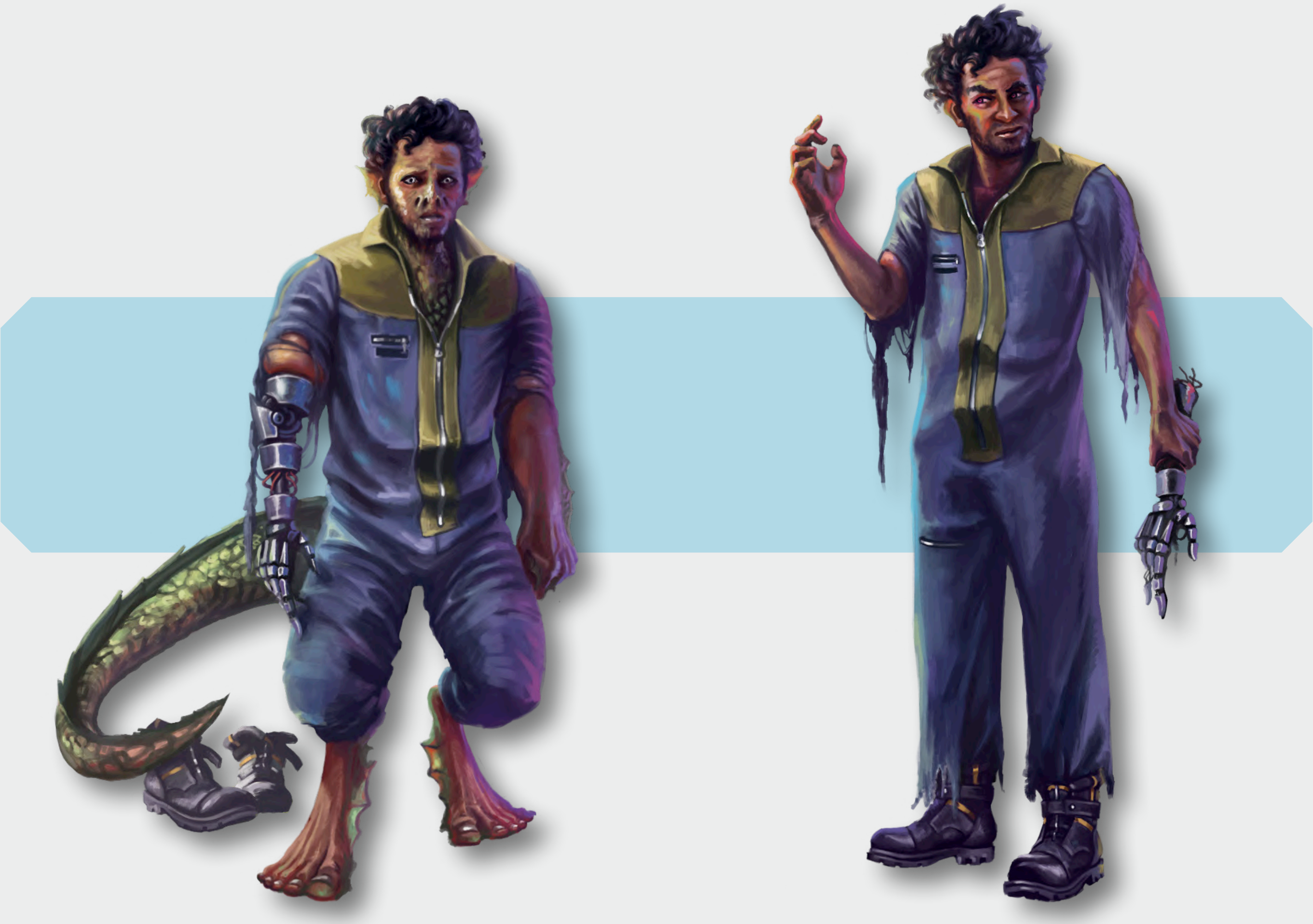
There really is no limit to how far the Travellers can develop in the long term but in this campaign they are capped at 100 RI until they defeat Tsyamoykyo's forces at Vaykouh. This, given they have already experienced two uplift events, is sufficient to have one Path maximised at level 6 or multiple paths opened up at a lower level. This represents a very powerful being. The Travellers may want more but they have hit some kind of barrier. A way to pass this one presents itself at the Oytrip of Vaykouh. Each 100 RI thereafter a new barrier will be encountered which will require a new major undertaking or shift in perception to bypass. This may be the driving force for a new campaign as the Travellers seek new sources of enlightenment. There are six barriers in total, at every 100 RI. Once the sixth is surpassed the Traveller can in theory develop unlimited capabilities.

Research Station Gamma RI

Action	RI Gained
Used the lab to undertake a basic analysis of their genetic and physical situation.	2D+2
Used the lab to undertake a detailed analysis of their genetic and physical situation.	3D+6
Obtained and analysed the station's research on psionics, including all the irrelevant nonsense.	3D
Obtained and analysed the station's research on Droyne and Chirpers.	2D+2
Asked the Captain of Knowledge relevant questions and endured hours of lectures on abstruse subjects.	1D, since there might be *something* useful in there

Other RI Awards

Action	Award
Undertaking a comprehensive study of the changes that occur in Droyne after casteing. This information is not available outside Droyne society other than in the vaguest possible terms. The Oytrips of Andor or Vaykouh may be willing to provide data which could be studied over the course of 2D days.	2D
Revisiting the Chamber of Hidden Knowledge on Andor with specific reference to the genetic cache and development of Droyne post-casteing.	2D+4
Obtaining significant data on the perversion of the casteing ritual by Tsyamoykyo and the nature of changes undergone by the victims. This information is available at Tsyamoykyo's lair and can be pieced together from records held by Omicron Division and the Oytrip of Vaykouh.	3D



SIGNPOSTS

In order to give the Travellers as much agency as possible, *Wrath of the Ancients* has a very open structure. The downside to this approach is that Travellers might lose the thread of the plot or become distracted by other events. The Referee should allow the Travellers to make side trips or investigate whatever they find interesting, but there is a point where Tsyamoykyo's plans will go ahead without their opposition. The Travellers have quite enough information to realise they need to act against Tsyamoykyo, and soon, or he will launch his campaign to conquer Charted Space. If they choose not to do so they should not be railroaded… but there will be consequences.

If the Travellers forget what they are doing or cannot figure out how to do it, one or more of the following 'signposts' can be imposed by the Referee to put them back on the right path. These incidents can also be used to remind the Travellers of what is happening. If they still decide to ignore the matter, that is their choice. The outcome of the campaign will be different as a result. In all likelihood, Tsyamoykyo's servitors will complete their preparations and launch a strike into Imperial space. They will assault the Oytrips at Andor and Candory along with Imperial fleet bases in the rimward half of the Spinward Marches. Moving impossibly fast using ship teleporters, the advanced warships of Tsyamoykyo can defeat the Imperial Navy in detail before some of its assets even realise there is an attack.

Resistance will firm up eventually, of course, and the Travellers may find themselves fighting alongside Omicron Division and what remains of the Spinward Marches fleet against overwhelming odds. They may emerge as leaders of the resistance against a resurgence of the Ancients. Who knows? Perhaps they will somehow win. The devastation wrought by a furious Tsyamoykyo will be immense but perhaps he can be brought down by an assault on his fortress. The situation in that case will be more desperate than in the campaign as written but it is possible the Travellers will triumph in the end. The Referee should give them sufficient opportunity to forestall this wave of destruction, using the following 'signposts' to show them the way if necessary.

MERCEDES

Mercedes is the primary guide for the Travellers. She has straight-out told them she intends to confront and destroy Tsyamoykyo… somehow… and where she is headed. They may forget about this hint, or Mercedes may be out of the picture. If so, another guide may emerge.

THE EMISSARY

Itwyoso is an emissary from the Oytrip of Vaykouh. He is a Droyne Sport, with one mission – get help for his people. He is headed for the Oytrips he knows about, hoping to obtain some help in the form of ships, artefacts or anything else he can use. Whilst his mission is targeted on Droyne communities he is willing to take any help he can get. The Zhodani might be a good prospect; the Imperials less so but worth a try. If the Travellers are flying a ship that looks like Droyne or the Ancients made it, Itwyoso decides to approach them. If they are servitors of the enemy, he will die having done his absolute best. If they are possible allies he may yet succeed in his mission.

THE OMICRON DIVISION AGENT

Tugak Imshur is a minor official or merchant at a starport the Travellers pass through. Whilst not part of Omicron Division, Tugak receives a regular payment to pass on messages and occasionally hold items for Omicron personnel. Recently a general call went out; all Omicron personnel were to be presented with a data packet and instructed to make preparations for the coming campaign. Whether they proceed to the Oytrip of Vaykouh or take measures to resist an attack locally will depend on the resources they have available. Tugak also has orders to try to recruit anyone who might be useful.

The Travellers fit the description and will be offered the data packet. It contains footage from the attack on Andor and the location of the Oytrip of Vaykouh, along with a grim and dire analysis of the situation which is broadly correct but, if anything, underplays just how bad things are. The data packet mentions that all Omicron Division's combat assets in the sector have been reassigned to the defence of Vaykouh but that any and all assistance is desperately needed. It does not mention – because Omicron did not know at the time it was recorded – that those combat assets are now floating wreckage.

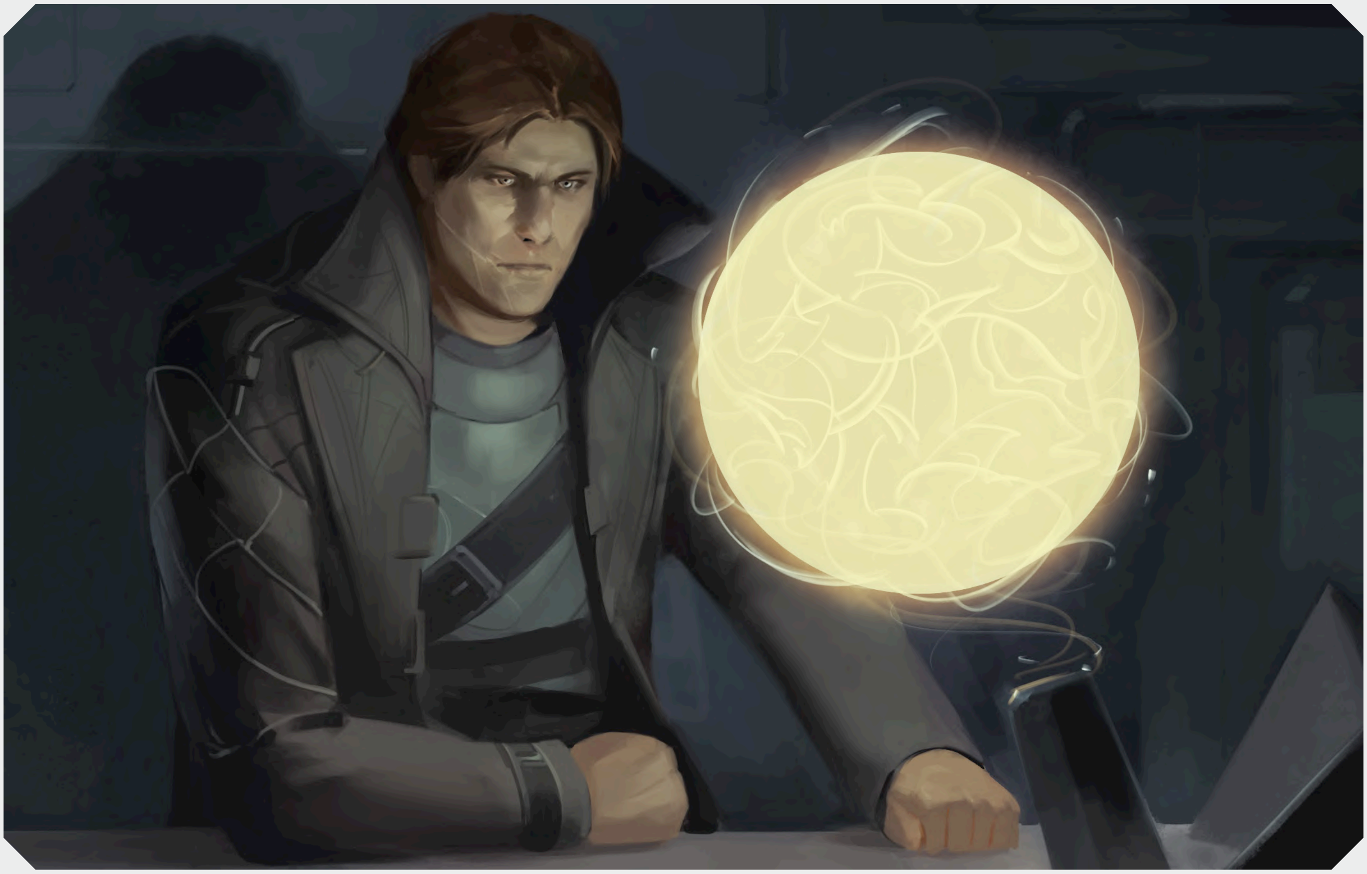
SHIP OF FOOLS

The Travellers encounter a chartered far trader or similar vessel, with improvised accommodation in the hold. It is carrying an assortment of the sort of Ancients Hunters who think Aish Nirkha is a reliable source of information. Word has somehow reached them that an actual Ancient is stirring and they are going to investigate. This will end in disaster one way or another; these people are deluded and rather clueless, and will probably land themselves in danger before getting another few parsecs.

This incident could be tragically heroic, comical or just embarrassing depending on the character of the group. It may be that the Hunters know about the threat and want to fight despite not knowing how. Alternatively, they might want to observe or even throw themselves at the feet of this emerging Ancient and worship him. Tsyamoykyo would like that. Whatever their motivation, the Ship of Fools can serve as a reminder to the Travellers that something big is unfolding just beyond Imperial space.

THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE

This incident can only take place if the Travellers are in possession of an unpaired teleporter-communicator such as the one found in the containment globe at Gamma. If so, it suddenly produces a faintly glowing sphere which 'falls' upward out of the teleporter ring and halts at the manipulator arm. The sphere is inscribed with patterns that trigger a brief psionic dream. It shows a devastated world, with gigantic war machines ranging over it, and reveals the location of the Oytrip of Vaykouh. The message is a call to arms; a request for aid. It is not clear if the images are historical or a warning.



SECOND TRANSIT

The Travellers now know that events are unfolding on Braudel in the Trojan Reach. It will take them some weeks to get there. The most direct route is by way of the Mora, Glisten and Pax Rulin subsectors, a voyage of about 36 parsecs. A lot could happen along the way and the Travellers might want to make some side trips. One possibility is a return visit to Andor. If the Travellers do this, they will find the system has been heavily reinforced by Imperial Navy vessels, with more expected to arrive in the near future. All incoming ships are stopped and searched, then turned around and sent elsewhere… except Droyne vessels. Nothing has changed in that regard.

If the Travellers are flying a 'Droyne-style' vessel or have Andorian transponder codes there is no attempt to interfere with them. If not, vessels will be sent to intercept them. If the Oytrip recognises the Travellers and considers them friends or useful associates, a signal from the planet causes the navy vessels to abandon their intercept. If the Travellers do not have this advantage they will not be permitted through the blockade without providing a very good reason. How they go about this is very much up to them.

Travellers who are friendly with the Andorian Oytrip will be welcomed and permitted to enter the Chamber of Hidden Knowledge if they wish. By now the Oytrip knows of the attack on Vaykouh and has been asked to provide aid. A few ships have been sent but the Andorian community does not have many and needs to concentrate on rebuilding and strengthening its defences. A side trip to Andor should not lengthen the transit by so much that events on Braudel reach crisis point before the Travellers arrive. This is a piece of plot facilitation and can serve as a guideline for the Referee – if the Travellers want to do something that makes a good story, there is time to do it.

A transit back to Andor is likely to reverse the route already discussed on page 112. A more direct transit goes through Mora and Trin's Veil or the Glisten subsectors, then Egryn and/or Pax Rulin.

MORA

Conditions in Mora have already been discussed on page 115.

GLISTEN

Glisten is a frontier but faces a region generally thought to contain few or minor potential threats. Its subsector fleet is a notorious dumping-ground for politically over-promoted officers or those with little promise. As a result, interactions with the navy and local officials are likely to be annoyingly pompous and conducted in an inefficient or rather lazy way. The Travellers are as likely to fall foul of someone for failing to inflate their ego as to be considered a security threat or persons of interest in the Andor Incident.

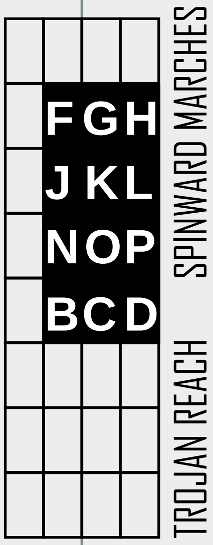
EGRYN

Egryn, which contains the world of Braudel, lies wholly outside Imperial territory. Naval patrols are sometimes staged but this is uncommon, and Imperial authorities have limited influence on most worlds. News filters relatively slowly across the subsector, so even several months after the Andor Incident little or nothing is likely to be known about it here. On the other hand, local officials are not regulated by Imperial law and may impede the Travellers or try to shake them down for extra fees.

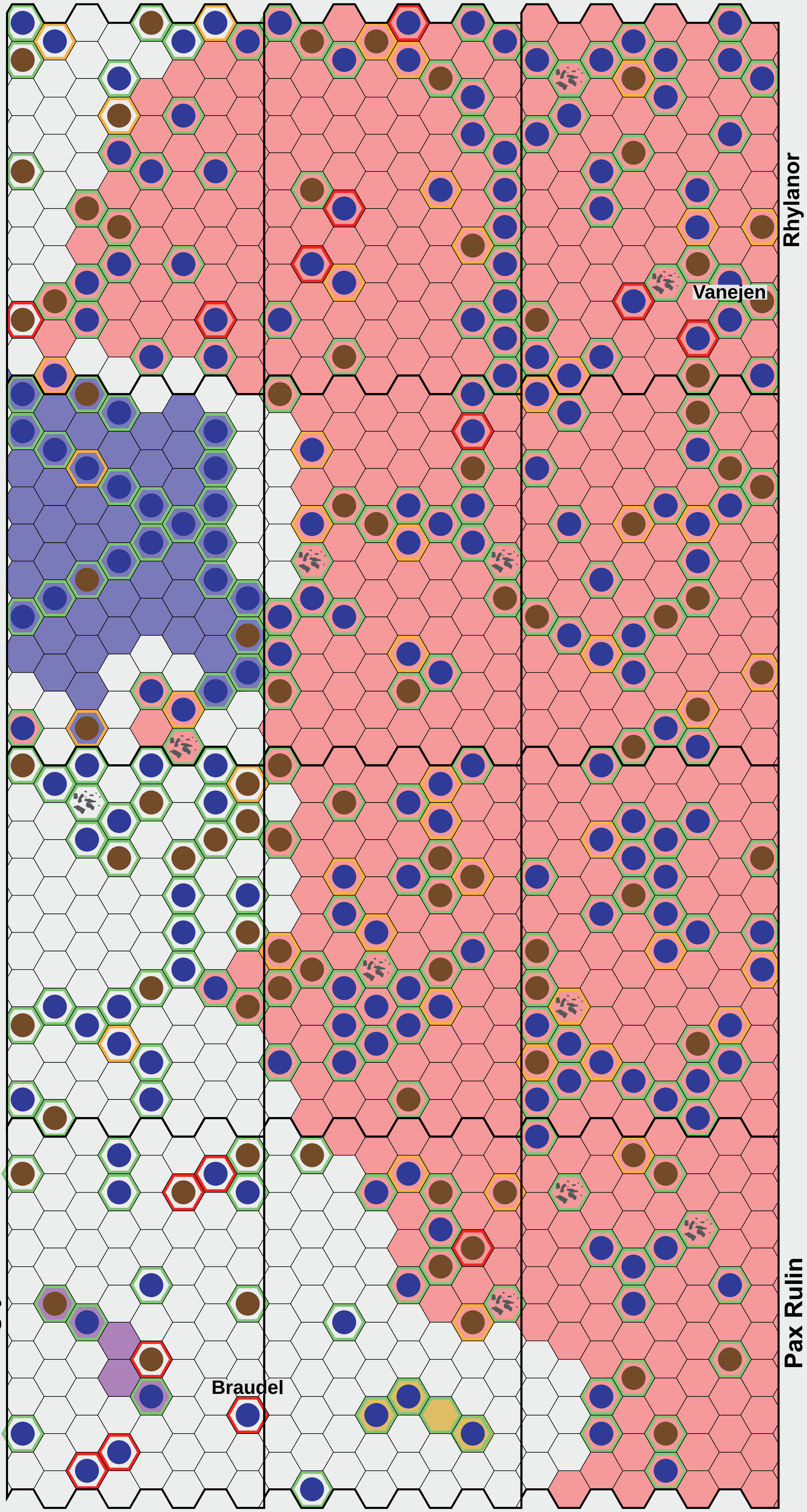
PAX RULIN

The Imperial worlds in the Pax Rulin subsector are a frontier region but one facing a low-threat area. Naval forces based here are charged with monitoring the borders and maintaining a presence beyond them. Ships close to the border are likely to be treated with slightly greater than usual suspicion. The Senlis Foederate, in the rimward end of the subsector, is an extremely minor non-Imperial state. Interference in the Travellers' business is possible if local officials think they can get away with it.

ANDOR TO VANEJEN


F G H
J K L
N O P
B C D
SPINWARD MARCHES
TROJAN REACH

- 🔵 Planet (water present)
- 🟤 Planet (dry)
- 🟥 Third Imperium
- 🟦 Sword Worlds Confederation
- 🟪 Belgardian Sojurnate
- 🟨 Senlis Foederate


Vilis
Rhylanor
Vanejen
Egryn
Braudel
Pax Rulin

BRAUDEL

The world of Braudel lies in an area of low stellar density sometimes referred to as the Outrim Void. A jump-3 or higher ship is required to reach it, and there is little reason to go there. The world was the subject of a badly managed colony mission at some time in the distant past, with the human population gradually dwindling ever since. By current estimates there are less than a thousand people left on Braudel.

The world is Red Zoned since the discovery that its inhabitants possessed psionic abilities. Plans to conduct a proper study of this phenomenon and the unique culture that surrounds it have never received the funding required. As a result, the world is generally ignored except for the odd Scout Service vessel passing through and periodic maintenance on the interdiction-warning beacon satellites.

The world is small and rather dry, with extensive steppelands which provide grazing for the indigenous yurfal (see page 190). These grazing creatures provide most of the needs of the population, who dwell in widely scattered hamlets connected by river barges or large land yachts. It is thought that the human population use telempathy to control the yurfal, although how their psionic abilities were developed has long been a mystery. Early Imperial missions concluded there was no Zhodani influence on Braudel and that a TL5 population numbering just a few hundred posed no threat. This analysis was correct but incomplete.

The Imperial survey entirely missed the presence of several million Droyne on Braudel. This is not surprising; they were deliberately hiding using methods designed to conceal them from the technology of the Ancients. That a handful of Imperials, looking in the wrong places, failed to find the underground cities of the Oytrip was more or less inevitable. The Oytrip of Vaykouh did not want to be found and succeeded for centuries in remaining hidden.

The Droyne cities are located in forbidding terrain such as badlands and mountains, with concealed entrances leading to chains of artificial caverns. The Oytrip has technology slightly in advance of the best the Imperium has, although differing considerably in approach. Few Ancients artefacts are possessed; anything with emissions that could be detected at a distance was hidden in star systems far away. There are some Ancients power sources and useful devices, notably a small automated shipyard used to create extremely stealthy scout vessels and, more commonly, ships that closely resemble those used by other Oytripin.

BRAUDEL

UWP X543200-5

System	K4 V Dwarf 3 Gas Giants — 0 Planetoid Belts — 6 Other Worlds	
Starport	X	None
Size	5	8,000km
Atmosphere	4	Thin; Tainted
Hydrosphere	3	30%
Population	2	Hundreds
Government Type	0	No Government Structure
Law Level	0	No prohibitions
Technology Level	5	Mass Production

Until very recently the Oytrip avoided detection, even when the world was surveyed or a scientific expedition visited the human population. Contact was made between the humans and the Droyne, with assistance from time-to-time on condition the humans did not tell outsiders about the Oytrip. The human population for the most part do not know about the Droyne, with relations being a closely guarded secret among a few families.

THE FALL OF VAYKOUH

Tsyamoykyo's assault was not unexpected but it was sudden. The Oytrip had expended most of its ships in blunting his advance towards Imperial space, and stood no chance of defending in space. Concealment was the only option and that failed. Tsyamoykyo's fleet emerged from jump in groups surrounding the planet and ready for a battle. There was none to speak of, just a couple of messenger ships attempting to escape with warnings to distant allies. These were eliminated in graphic fashion using weapons Tsyamoykyo rarely got to deploy. One was ripped apart by matter-twisting beams and the other erased from existence with a temporal weapon.

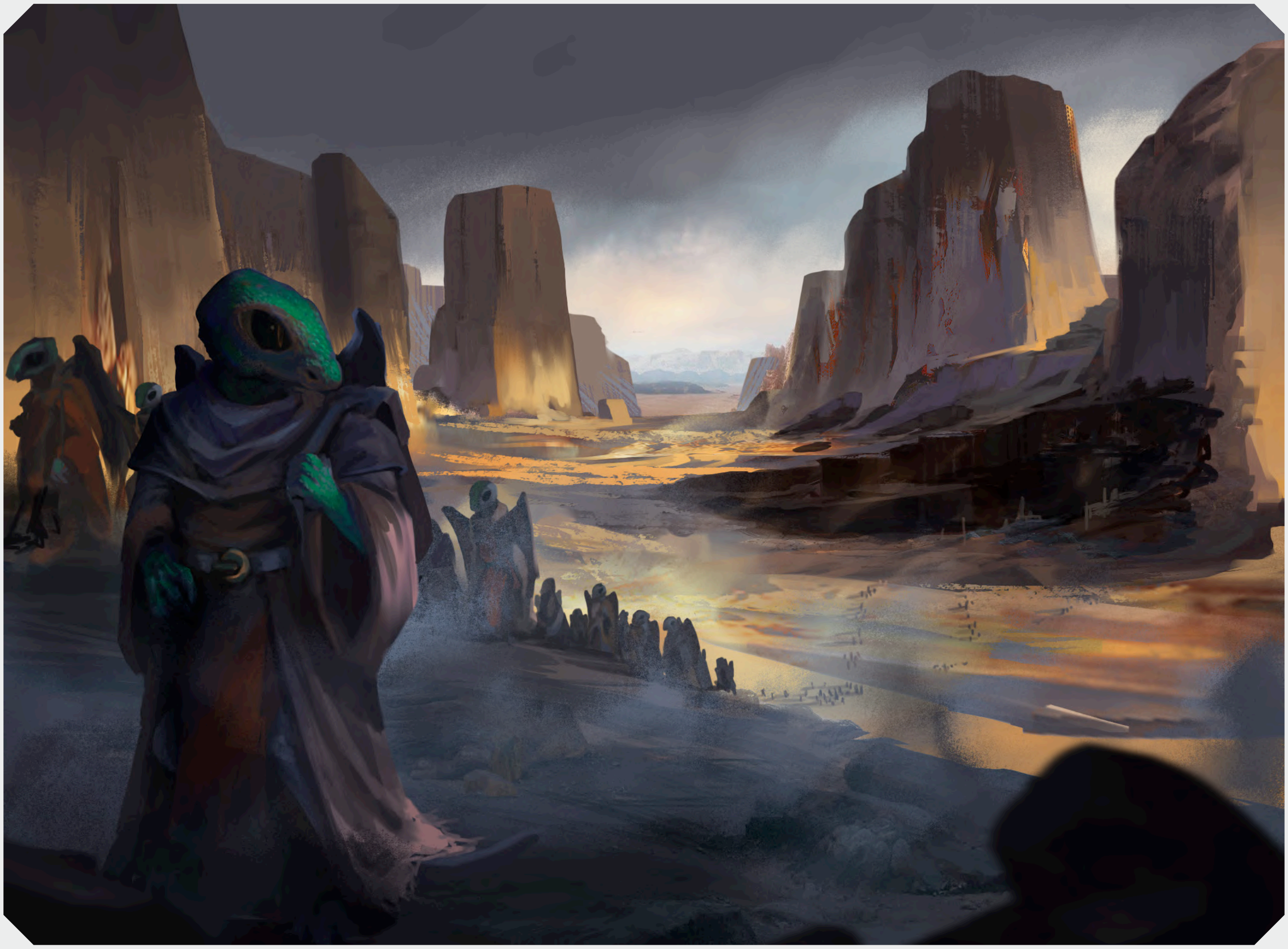
This piece of exotic overkill had an additional and unexpected effect. A century earlier, the converted carrier *Rustic Idyll* was approaching Braudel. Her commander, the famous 'Mad' Captain Maddox, suspected there was something hidden on the world and wanted to investigate. Instead her vessel was caught in the backlash of the temporal weapon and wrenched out of the time stream. It remains, stuck between then and now, just outside the planetary orbit.

With no orbital defence to speak of, the fleet began attacking areas suspected of concealing a Droyne city. Some were simply devastated, using ground-penetrating weapons or super-disintegrator beams. Annihilators were used as well, creating clouds of charged particles that churned even Braudel's thin atmosphere into violent electrical storms. Human populations were not deliberately targeted, largely because they were tiny and irrelevant, but about half the human population has perished since the attacks as a result of secondary effects.

The weapon of choice for city attacks was a complex missile system designed to plunge deep into the rock before activating a disintegrator warhead. This was not intended to destroy the cities but lay them bare for assault. However, uncontrolled disintegrator pulses are an imprecise weapon. Large areas of the cities were disintegrated or buried under falling rubble. Ground forces poured into what was left.

Tsyamoykyo did not hold back. His best troops were Droyne warriors but he had thousands of specially made creatures to precede them. Assault masses, G482, boarders and others flung themselves at the defenders, who did what they could. Those cities that held out past the first day were simply obliterated with antimatter bombs and other savage weapons – along with the troops that had failed to overrun them.

Mopping up the remains of the resistance, Tsyamoykyo had surviving Leaders-of-Leaders brought before him. The most defiant he chose as his tool, applying psionic conditioning until his victim could no longer even conceive of disobedience. This was Ordssess,



greatest of his people and most dedicated to keeping them free of dominance. Tsyamoykyo could have broken him but this was worse. He left Ordssess in complete possession of his personality and desires but overlaid an imperative to rule what was left of the Oytrip in Tsyamoykyo's name. He then set great works in process and departed for his lair.

Since then, the Droyne of Vaykouh have laboured to build what Tsyamoykyo wanted. Juveniles are taken to the labs to be casted into monsters, replacing those expended in the attack. Towering structures rise above the ravaged plains of Braudel and bands of Warriors train for the next assault. Braudel and its hidden Oytrip have become a war camp for Tsyamoykyo; a forward base on the edge of Imperial space. Over it all presides Ordssess, unwilling instrument of the Ancients.

THE RESISTANCE

On Braudel itself there is little resistance but the potential exists. A few bands of Droyne were able to escape the cities and have found shelter among the human population or concealed themselves in the wilderness. They are high-tech city folk, trying to learn how to wrest a living from a damaged planet, and their numbers dwindle every day. Within the cities, the population obey their Leaders and their Leaders answer to a top echelon conditioned to total obedience. It is the nature of Droyne society that everyone else just accepts the situation and obeys. This is what made the Droyne so useful to the Ancients and what Tsyamoykyo intends to bend to his own designs.

The scattered survivor groups pose no threat to Tsyamoykyo's new regime but among those hiding with the humans is the senior Drone who served Ordssess. Her name is Ryau. She was sent away along with his most trusted Sport, Irthoyl. Irthoyl escaped in a starship and went looking for allies whilst Ryau remained to see what she could do. She is supported by a Kroyloss of other Droyne who come from various households and are just barely managing to deal with their situation. Their Leader is inexperienced and totally out of his depth, but he knows he must protect Ryau and find a way to overthrow Ordssess.

Offworld there are a few emissaries searching for assistance and the remnants of the Oytrip's fleet. This is just a handful of smaller ships which were able to escape the battle with Tsyamoykyo. They were ordered not to join the defence of the homeworld as this would be nothing more than a pointless gesture. Droyne do not make those; a battle that cannot be won is not worth fighting. These ships have gathered in the outsystem to await an opportunity of some kind… such as the arrival of the Travellers.

THE BRAUDEL SYSTEM

When the Travellers arrive in the Braudel system they will detect anomalies. There is some kind of energy disturbance in a far orbit and others, of a different kind, on the planet. The orbital disturbance gives off exotic energy types including tachyons and particles of an unknown and variable nature – variable in the sense that these particles change their energy state and even type in a manner that should not be possible.

If the Travellers attempt to study the emissions they will eventually be able to determine they are a sort of after-effect of a high-energy weapon discharge but not one they have seen before. In fact, after-effect is not quite the right word; what the Travellers are seeing is temporal bleed. Among the weapons available to Tsyamoykyo is a temporal dislocation device. It was used on a fleeing vessel, representing a truly colossal degree of overkill, and caused the component particles of the vessel to be scattered across thousands of years whilst retaining their relative proximity to Braudel.

One unintended consequence of this was that some particles intersected with a ship that had been present at the same location almost a century earlier. This was *Rustic Idyll*, commanded by Captain Maddox and crewed by her followers. Ever since that moment she has been stuck in a nightmare world where the barriers of reality are eroded. An analysis of the sensor data will be confusing, to say the least, but will eventually yield fleeting images of the converted light carrier. It is not, at this point, possible to contact the vessel.

The Travellers' arrival will be noted by the handful of Droyne ships hiding in the outsystem. After some consultation they send out one of their number to make contact. Their hope is that the Travellers are friendly, perhaps even allies coming to help. If not, hostility will fall on just one of the vessels whilst the others may be able to escape. This vessel has a colleague of the Travellers' aboard – Mercedes Karamaka. How this came to be requires some explanation.

Before contact is made the Travellers will get a general impression of conditions on Braudel. The navigational database mentions a thin atmosphere and generally habitable conditions. Readings from the planet contradict this. The upper atmosphere is a turbulent mass of electrical storms, with some points of particular intensity. These are impossible to penetrate with even the sensor equipment available to the Travellers. The world is not noted as having any major settlements or any technology above TL5 but there are emission readings which suggest a very different situation.

Some areas of the planet are blanketed by dust clouds thrown up by enormous ground-level explosions, with hotspots where the bedrock is still cooling. Surface temperatures are low everywhere, as a result of a nuclear winter effect arising from these dust clouds. There are power emissions from the surviving Droyne cities and one structure that gives off exotic signals correlating to some known Ancients technologies. This structure is vast; several kilometres across at the base and rising as a series of spires to a height of about 5 kilometres. It is moving.

It is not immediately apparent what this structure, or ship, or whatever it is might be, or why it is present on Braudel. More detailed readings require getting closer, which might be inadvisable at this point. So long as the Travellers' vessel remains outside orbital distance it will be ignored and the Travellers would be well advised to obtain more information before getting any closer. Fortunately this is available once Mercedes makes contact.

CONTACT

Before the Travellers have time to do much more than take sensor readings, a small Droyne scout vessel makes contact with their ship. Whilst its automated diplomacy package is still rattling off greetings and praise for the obviously very eminent new arrivals, a second signal cuts through. This one is straight to the point. A video link shows Mercedes Karamaka standing in the command chamber of a Droyne vessel, wearing shimmering robes in the Droyne style but clearly made for her. She smiles wryly and waves.

Mercedes greets the Travellers and acknowledges that they no doubt have questions. She will answer those she can but suggests that both ships should pull back from proximity of Braudel. There is an abandoned Scout Service observation base on one of the system's planets; perhaps the Travellers will meet her there to discuss the present situation? Approaching the main world, she says, would be a very poor idea.

If the Travellers have other ideas, Mercedes is willing to accommodate them so long as they move away from Braudel for now. She will come aboard their ship if they like, or they could all try to crowd into a tiny Droyne scout. She will provide short answers to the Travellers' questions but does not have time to expand upon these:

- How is she here ahead of the Travellers? *Teleporter. Unpleasant.*
- Why is she here? *Told you, I've come to destroy the threat.*
- What is her status among the Droyne? *They honour an old friendship. Or something.*
- What is happening on-planet? *Bad things. Meet me for details.*
- Can we do anything about the situation? *Yes. Meet me for details.*
- What about…? *Just meet me and I'll explain what I can.*

If the Travellers do not agree to meet Mercedes at the installation, she will agree to a video conference or something similar. Alternatively, the Travellers can obtain information themselves but this will be inefficient and might not yield sufficient hard data to reveal all the possibilities. If the Travellers are not willing to cooperate, Mercedes will make her own attempt. She sneaks on-planet using the electrical storms as cover and does her best. She will never be heard from again.

TEMPORARY INSTALLATION ASHDII-1097

Temporary Installation Ashdii-1097 (TIA-1097) is a typical Imperial Interstellar Scout Service forward base. It was constructed using a crater on one of the system's rockball planets, with a landing area created by blasting the surface rock away and smoothing what remained with plasma torches. A set of prefabricated base sections were set up to create a basic living and working area, with a small reactor pod buried close to the landing area.

The installation was never intended to be more than a working base for scout ships or small craft observing the people of Braudel. It has an accommodation block, a command and administration block, and a general-work block set up with an array of standard Scout Service tools and a basic multipurpose laboratory. It sees use intermittently, often standing empty for years between missions lasting just a few months. Security is virtually non-existent; the installation relies on being unobtrusive and located in a remote Red Zone system. By the time the Travellers have landed, Mercedes will have disabled password access and similar features, giving her the run of the place.

LANDING AREA (1)

The landing area is large enough for about 800 tons of ships and craft, depending on their configuration. The surrounding surface is a little rough but a suitable landing area for a modest sized ship could be found nearby. A small Droyne scout ship is parked nearby.

CRATER WALL (2)

The crater wall has been augmented with fused material from the bottom to create a high surrounding berm. This was never envisaged as a security measure but will provide stability in the event of a quake or nearby meteorite impact. Once section of the wall is flattened to provide easy access.

REACTOR POD (3)

A typical automated reactor pod and its associated fuel tanks are buried just outside the entry point to the crater. Only the fuel filler/dispenser unit is above ground, with power trunking to the structures running under the flattened area. The fuel tanks contain enough for years of operation and the occasional refilling of a small ship's reserves.

FLATTENED AREA (4)

A more or less smoothed-off area runs past the structures and gradually becomes rougher as it tails away. It was apparently rather lazily blasted with plasma torches from the crater end.

WORKING AREA (5)

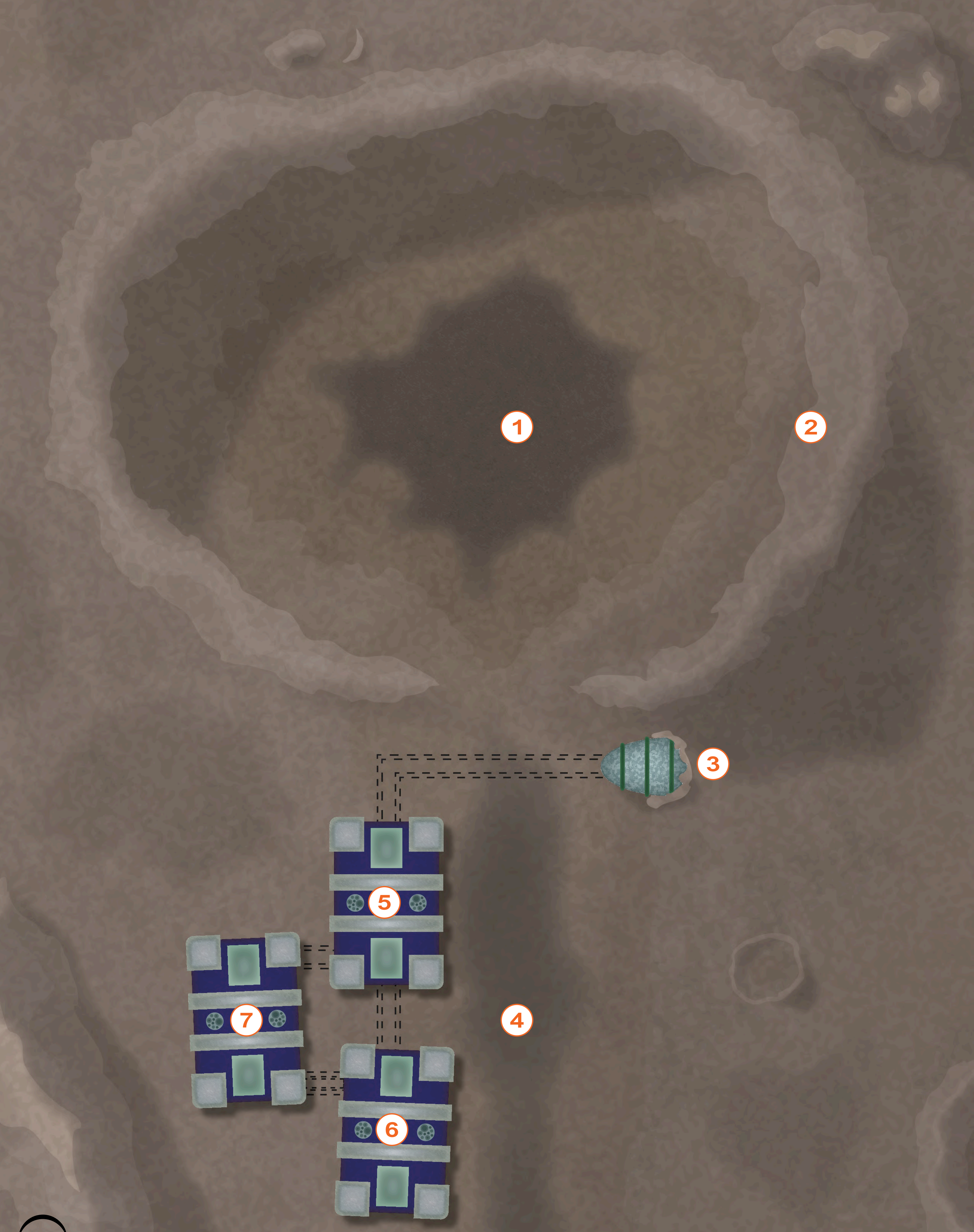
A rectangular building made of prefabricated sections, with a domed micrometeorite shield on top, this part of the installation contains a small lab set up to analyse everything from rock samples to plant matter or soil from the mainworld. There is also storage and maintenance for vacc suits, a couple of admin/office areas and some unused space that could be repurposed for more or less anything.

ACCOMMODATION AREA (6)

The accommodation area consists of three modest-sized chambers for eating, recreation and exercise, plus an accommodation block with eight starship-type cabins. Its storage area contains scout-issue clothing and a large quantity of old but edible ration packs.

COMMAND AREA (7)

The command area is mostly empty, with a single chamber set up for communications and general base administration tasks. The spare space is where Mercedes would prefer to meet with the Travellers as it is the most open. She has been cooped up in a small ship for quite a while and would like the chance to pace about.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The installation receives a constant feed from the interdiction-monitoring satellites over Braudel, or rather it did until a few minutes into the attack when they whited out and never came back online. The satellites were taken out during the fighting. Little remains of them but images from their last moments may be interesting.

MEETING MERCEDES

Mercedes is alone aboard the Droyne scout ship, which was given to her soon after her arrival aboard one of the larger surviving vessels. How this came to pass is described in Mercedes' Story – Part 2 on page 276. The details are not really important at present; what matters is there may be a chance to halt Tsyamoykyo's plans before they advance much further. There is a gap in his defences resulting from his arrogance and furious temper. Exploiting it will give direct access to his lair; for that, Mercedes needs the help of the Travellers.

She is keen to get out of her little Droyne ship and into the base, if only for the chance to stretch her legs. It is likely she will arrive before the Travellers but if they are in a hurry she will land beside their vessel and lead the way into the base. It may occur to the Travellers that she prefers to meet in places where the host might not have surveillance equipment. Perhaps she does not trust the Droyne completely? This is more less true; Mercedes has a habit of secrecy which has always served her well.

Mercedes explains what she has learned so far and how that knowledge might be put into practice. Tsyamoykyo is not here. He has subjugated what is left of the Droyne population and is creating a forward base for his push into Imperial space. At present the planet is more or less completely under his control but that could be altered. Derailing this plan would only buy time, however, and time for what? Even Omicron Division does not have the sort of weaponry that could halt an invasion. Assembling all their forces from right across the Imperium would simply make destroying them quicker and easier for the enemy. The only answer is to eliminate Tsyamoykyo himself. Mercedes thinks she has found a way.

Tsyamoykyo has a pocket universe, like most of the other Ancients, difficult to access for those not invited. It is, in theory, possible to find one of the points where the pocket universe intersects the macro universe and force an entry. However, these points are usually very remote and/or heavily fortified, with decoy entry points a real possibility. Special equipment is necessary to force an entry and the attempt would certainly be detected. Such a direct assault on an Ancient's lair is unlikely to succeed.

However, the Ancients made extensive use of teleporters, including ship teleporters capable of moving large objects or vessels. These devices are made in pairs, with movement only possible between the platforms of a pair. A teleporter can be carried aboard a vessel to a very distant point, after which an instantaneous move from one platform to the other allows hundreds of parsecs to be crossed in an instant.

The macro universe anchor point for Tsyamoykyo's lair could be hundreds of light-years away, given the time frames implied by his ship movements. However, he is building a ship teleporter here on Braudel. It is almost complete. If it could be seized, it would offer direct and instantaneous access to his fortress. Sending a ship though should protect the occupants from the deleterious effects of long-distance teleportation. Once inside his lair, an assault team could… come up with something. Maybe.

Mercedes' plan is to seize control of the ship teleporter here on Braudel and send a vessel through into the pocket universe of Tsyamoykyo. This ship will carry every Warrior and fighter Mercedes can find. There are a few hiding out on the other surviving Droyne ships but many more will be needed. In addition, a large enough ship will be needed but Mercedes has an idea about that too.

MERCEDES' PLAN: THE SHIP

The Travellers cannot have missed the temporal anomaly close to Braudel. This centres on a converted Imperial carrier now known as the *Rustic Idyll* – the missing ship of Captain Maddox. Mercedes believes the vessel was struck by backwash from the temporal dislocation device used during the attack on Braudel and has been stuck since 1019. It was probably completely out of phase with the universe until the timeline caught up with the firing-instant of the weapon. Within a few days or weeks it will move out of phase again and the ship will be lost forever.

The original identity of Captain Maddox was Banni Seliar, commander of the mission that accidentally found the installation under Twilight's Peak. Like Mercedes she is out of her time, but where Mercedes took the long way round Maddox and her crew have been trapped for a century. There is no way of knowing what conditions are like aboard her ship but Mercedes wants to try for a rescue. If Maddox can be freed from the temporal weapon her vessel will carry the assault force into the lair of Tsyamoykyo… at least, Mercedes hopes so. Even if not she hopes to rescue her old friend.

The rescue will require someone to enter the temporal anomaly and… somehow find a way back out. Mercedes has few ideas about that but the Travellers might be able to come up with something. In fact there is a way, which will become apparent to the Travellers as they deal with the other big problem – the occupation of Braudel.

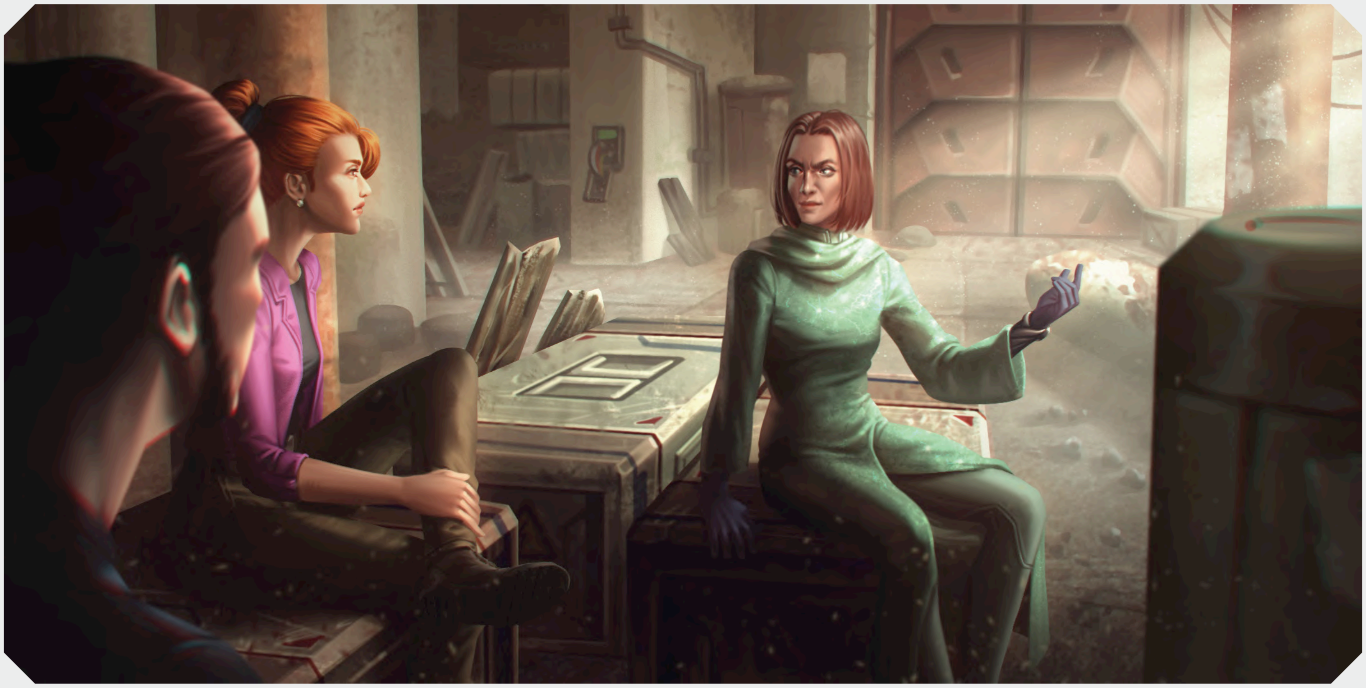
MERCEDES' PLAN: THE PLANET

Mercedes has learned that Ordssess, current Leader of the Oytrip of Vaykouh, has been somehow altered by Tsyamoykyo and is now incapable of disobeying him or working against his interests. Some other senior Leaders have been similarly conditioned. The nature of Droyne society is such that control over the Leaders translates into total control of the Oytrip. Mercedes has a plan to break that control.

Mercedes knows that the most senior Drone in the service of Ordssess escaped during the attack and was concealed among a human population with some other Droyne. She may be able to break through the conditioning imposed upon Ordssess, placing him in control of an Oytrip once more opposed to Tsyamoykyo. This is preferable to just killing him, since command will at that point devolve onto another conditioned Leader. An alternative would be to kill Ordssess and all conditioned Leaders but the chances of success are slim.

Once the Oytrip is brought back under proper control, the ship teleporter can be seized. That will be difficult, as it stands atop a war machine the Droyne are constructing to Tsyamoykyo's specifications. It is partially completed and could probably devastate the entire planet even in its current state. The machine appears to be intended to provide security for the forward base but could easily be a weapon of vengeance.

So, ultimately all that is necessary is to liberate Braudel, raise an army of Droyne, seize the teleporter, free Maddox' ship from the temporal anomaly, penetrate the lair of Tsyamoykyo… and somehow kill him. The Travellers do have some sort-of-advantages. They are likely to be ignored on Braudel until they start causing trouble and the human population there is completely ignored by the occupiers. Electrical activity in the atmosphere should assist in a stealthy approach to the planet. It should at least be possible to get on the ground and make contact with Ryau. She may have useful information.



RULE THE RUINS

Braudel is a dry world with a thin atmosphere. Its taint is minor; a combination of grass pollens that can cause respiratory annoyance to about 70% of visitors and a serious reaction in around 1% of people. This can be overcome with the usual masks and precautions but standard anti-allergy preventative medicine will protect more conveniently for the duration of a short stay.

The thin atmosphere produces relatively little erosion, creating steep, sharp-toothed mountain ranges and poor soil. The land between the mountains is mostly open steppe with few trees or other large flora. Herds of yurfal, a large grazing animal, wander across the steppes. There are some forested regions, notably where runoff from a mountain range has created deeper or more fertile soil. These areas are important to the human population as they are the primary source of building and construction materials.

The tiny human population is officially rated TL5 but this represents a cottage industry, with a handful of expert crafters making almost every tool and device used on the planet. Offworld tech is almost non-existent and what few items have passed into the hands of the locals are of little use. Most of the population live on river barges or traverse the steppes in land yachts, typically migrating between known areas of good natural resources. Most of the population's needs are provided by the yurfal, which are plentiful and easy to hunt. The local diet is meat-heavy, with plant-based foods gathered when they are available and stored. Semi-cultivated areas are common along the rivers, with barges stopping to tend or gather the crops from time-to-time. This is not agriculture in the usual sense but more a habit of encouraging certain plants to be concentrated where they can be easily harvested.

Communities are rarely more than a dozen or so people, with local leaders emerging out of experience and previous success. There is no governmental structure and little need for one. The river and steppe groups interact quite frequently and most groups have a good idea where another might be at any given time. There are rumours of distant communities but the locals have no way to contact them. A few of the human communities have had contact with the Droyne but do not know about their cities. Although the attack on Braudel was not directed at the human groups, it was devastating nonetheless. Violent storms and electrical discharges caused direct casualties, whilst deaths among the yurfal herds will have a long-term effect. The human groups may need assistance just to survive.

THE SANILIS MOUNTAINS (1)

The greatest devastation was wrought against a Droyne city located under the mountain range known as Sanilis by the local human population. The city here was home to the best of the Oytrip's technology and could be considered its military centre. Perhaps Tsyamoykyo knew that some of the ships that attacked his fleet were constructed here, or perhaps it was just the stubborn resistance that angered him, but after a little more than a day of bitter fighting he ordered the city to be reduced to a wreck. It was targeted first by a gravity-powered planetbuster device, which used teleportation to accelerate a mass to incredible speeds. Blasting open the ground, the planetbuster caused an earthquake that brought down great landslides from nearby mountains. It was followed by a series of annihilator bombs.

The annihilators did not just disintegrate the city and its people; they created clouds of charged particles and a scattering of antimatter which interacted with material from the landslides. Whole mountains were vapourised in a series of matter-antimatter annihilations, creating a column of ionised debris reaching into the upper atmosphere. The reactions are still ongoing, although they are dying down at last. The whole area around the Sanilis range is subject to sensor distortion and white-out, with ionised clouds drifting east on prevailing winds.

BRAUDEL

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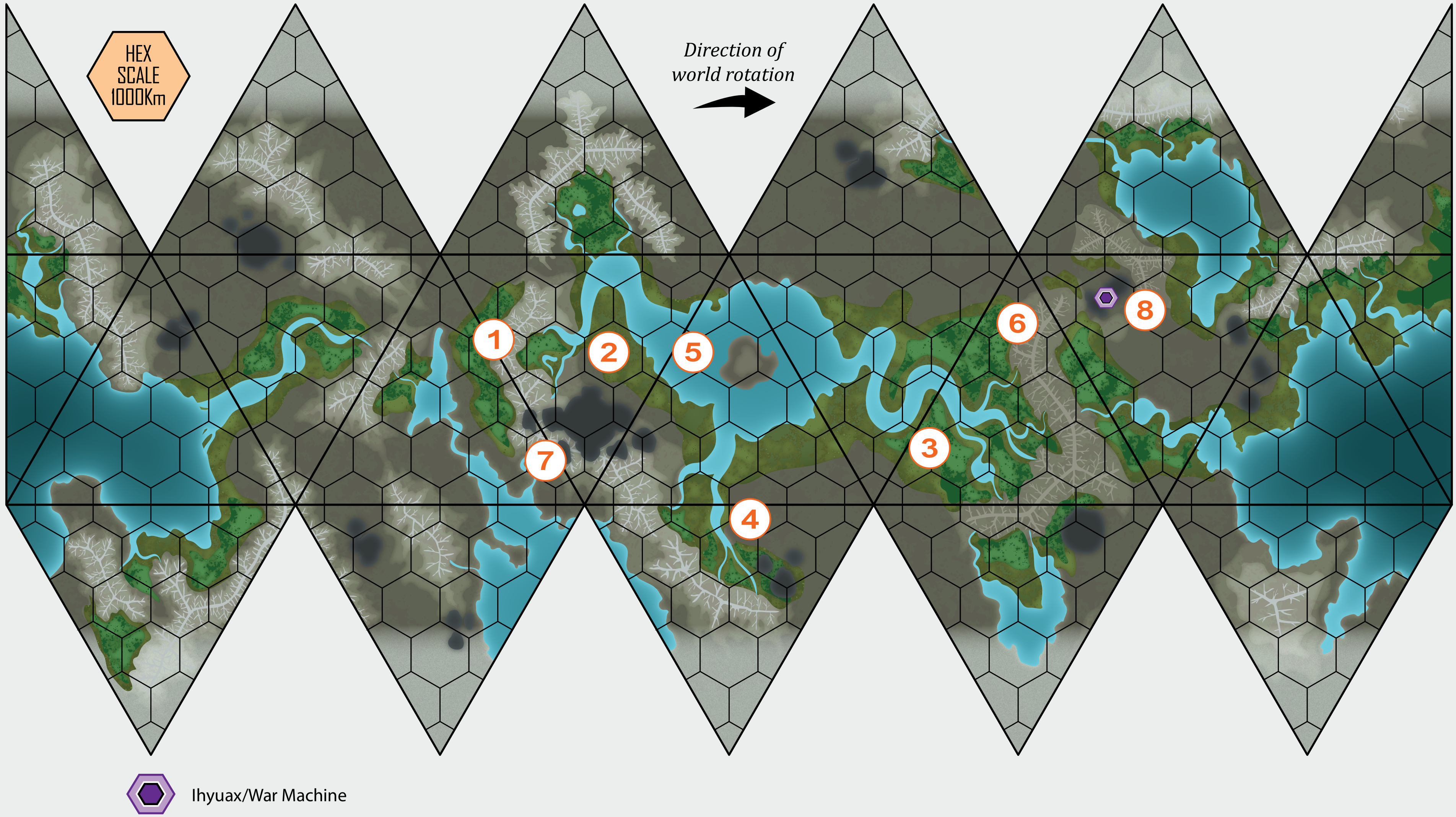
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Ihyuax/War Machine

The steppes to the east are already blanketed in dust, some of which is radioactive or contains exotic particles that slowly break down creating intermittent bursts of energy. There is no prospect for survival for any of the human groups caught in the region. Much of the dust has already fallen but clouds continue to drift eastwards as far as the next significant region of high ground. Another concentration is developing in the foothills there. It is likely the region will be uninhabitable for years but over time it may become a deep-soil belt and emerge as one of the more fertile parts of Braudel.

THE ROKISNI BASIN (2–5)

North-east of the Sanilis mountains, the steppe gradually falls away to a central point marked by a large freshwater lake. Offworld surveyors named it Lake Rokisni, though locals usually just refer to it as ‘the lake’. It is large, if not very deep, and fed by three major rivers. Again, locals do not travel far so tend to refer to the nearest river as ‘the river’, so the offworld map-makers imaginatively named the rivers Rokisni Alpha (2), Beta (3) and Gamma (4).

The rivers are wide and quite shallow. They meander through the steppe and create the occasional lake or oxbow lake before draining into Lake Rokisni (5). The lake is surrounded by seasonal wetlands, which expand and contract according to rainfall in the preceding weeks. At times these become almost completely dried out, with expanses of mud extending for tens of kilometres.

The lake’s central island has a special significance for the people of Braudel. No-one lives there permanently but river-going communities visit at times to trade and allow young people to marry into different families. There are so few of them that inbreeding is inevitable but the effects have been reduced by this practice. The island is therefore very much the centre of their shared culture.

MANSURTI RANGE (6)

The Mansurti Range is a chain of high hills or low mountains running roughly north-south across the steppeland. It delineates the eastern edge of the area known to be inhabited by humans. The range contains the headwaters of the river Rokisni Beta, which runs through a group of deep valleys containing areas of rare deep soil. This permits the growth of one of the few major forests on Braudel, a source of lumber for everything the human population needs to construct.

CRATER (7)

An ugly scar in the countryside marks the suspected location of a Droyne city. None was found once the wreckage was investigated. There are other such areas of devastation elsewhere on the planet. The invaders were not short of ordnance and quite willing to target the merest suspicion of a stronghold.

CITY OF IHYUAX AND THE WAR MACHINE (8)

The Droyne city of Ihyuax was captured more or less intact during the initial assault. Other than some collateral damage from access tunnels burned through the bedrock, its structures and population remain more or less intact. As a result it has become the de facto capital of the occupation. Droyne from other cities have been moved to Ihyuax and put to work constructing a great war machine which towers above the surrounding mountains.

THE OCCUPATION

Braudel is not occupied in the usual sense of the term. The human population is irrelevant and the Droyne can be made obedient by controlling their Leaders. In effect, Braudel is occupied by its own population, whose Warriors will fight to suppress any resistance or oppose an attempt to liberate the world. There are millions of Droyne on Braudel, up to now living peacefully in their hidden cities. In addition, Tsyamoykyo left one of his favoured servitors with a force of Droyne backed up by manufactured creatures to ensure obedience. These include G482, assault masses and some specialised variants kept hidden away in the city.

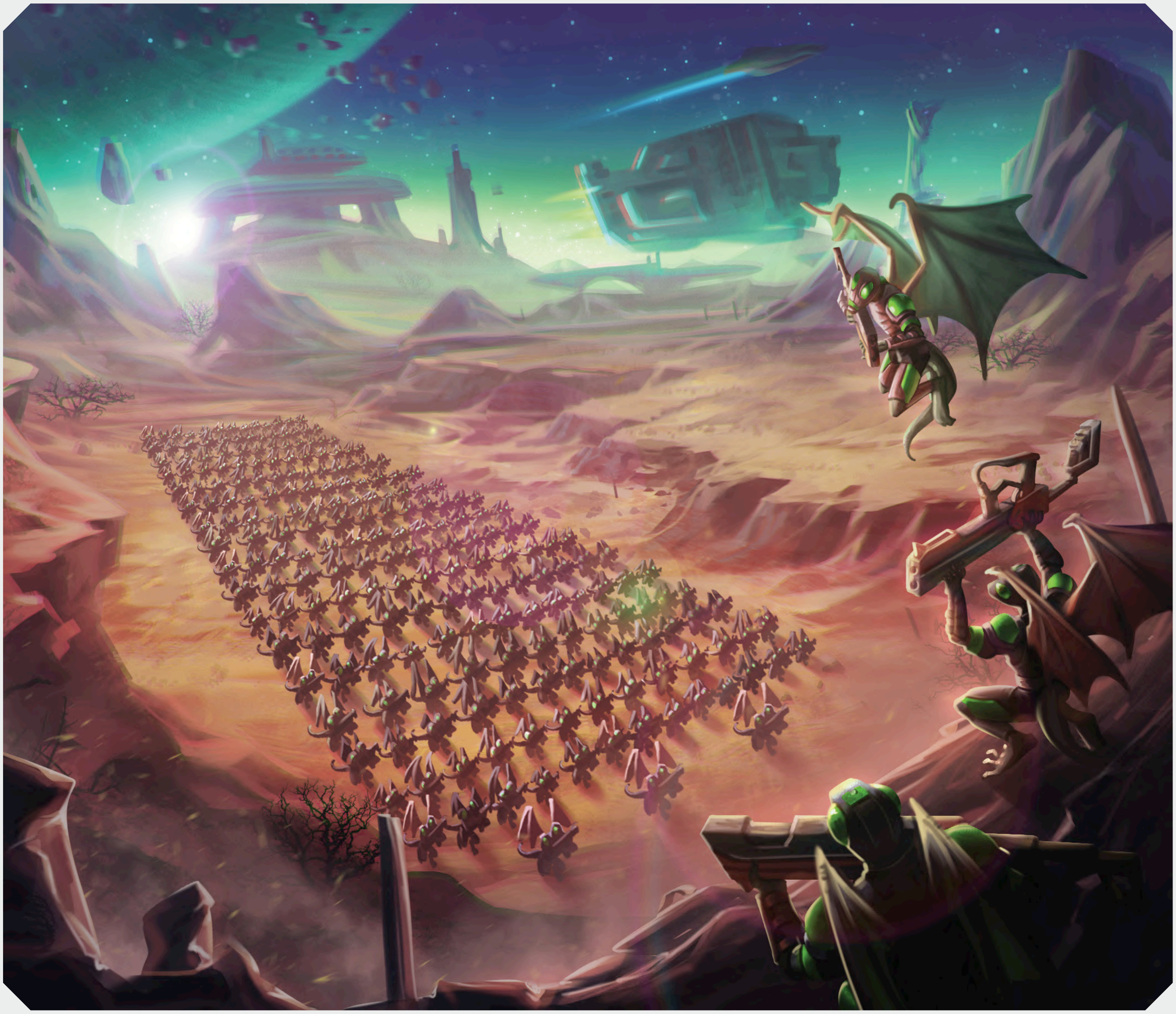
Almost the entire surviving Droyne population was relocated to Ihyuax where they are now servants of Tsyamoykyo’s great plan. Workers and Technicians labour to construct the great war machine whilst Warriors train for a planetary assault. Clearing a space in the mountains to carry out these activities was not difficult but it was certainly destructive. The area around Ihyuax is a flattened, lifeless scar where even hills have been removed using disintegrator weapons.

The occupation is complete and perfect so long as the greatest Leaders of the Oytrip are loyal to Tsyamoykyo. They are conditioned to obedience and he does not believe this conditioning can be broken. In that, he is incorrect. Removing the conditioning, or the Leaders themselves, would free the entire Oytrip instantly, making its personnel an asset in the fight against Tsyamoykyo. His creatures would resist and the G482 contingent would immediately target rebel Leaders. If this problem can be overcome, the war machine and all the other assets of Braudel would be at the Travellers' disposal.

THE RESISTANCE

There is no resistance on Braudel… but there could be. After meeting with Mercedes, the most telepathically adept of the Travellers senses a mind attempting to make contact. There is something odd about this, like multiple voices shouting in unison to achieve sufficient volume, but there is no sense of threat. The mind is alien and can be recognised as Droyne by anyone who has shared telepathic contact with Droyne in the past. This is Ryau, probably the most senior Drone remaining alive on Braudel and she is being assisted by a group of other telepaths to create a fleeting contact at such great range.

The contact is little more than an information dump and even this is exhausting for Ryau and her supporters. The Travellers gain an impression of thousands of Droyne training for combat or constructing weapons, and a vision of possibilities – the army descending on a human world or attacking Tsyamoykyo's lair. The Travellers receive a vision of Ryau waiting for them on an island in a lake, with revelations to come. There is a brief flash of recognition at the very end, as she senses the uplift process and recognises it. The Travellers gain the impression she can help with their development if they can reach her.



INFILTRATION

Getting to the surface of Braudel may be a problem. A ship will certainly be detected and attacked with powerful weapons mounted on the war machine. Electrical disturbances in the atmosphere might interfere with targeting and detection, but a direct assault is not feasible. However, the massive electrically-charged plume still emanating from the Sanilis Mountains could hide an approaching vessel. Once on the ground, detection is unlikely if the ship remains parked on the fringes of the disturbance.

Descending into the plume is a rough ride, with electrical discharges flashing on the hull and dust-laden gusts rising from beneath the ship. As the vessel drops through the upper layer of the plume, an Average (8+) Pilot check is necessary to ride the turbulence without bashing the Travellers around inside the ship. Clever Travellers might be able to create a mathematical or theoretical model of the air currents and smooth out the ride without needing to make any checks. If the Pilot check is failed everyone aboard takes 1D damage, reduced to D3 if they are properly strapped in.

Suddenly, the Travellers' vessel breaks through the upper dust cloud, revealing the scene below. There is nothing left of the city that used to exist under the mountains; nothing left to show it was there at all. The centre of the mountain range is a deep, steep-sided crater into which loose material from the surrounding peaks is still sliding. At the bottom is an orange-white vision of hell; charged particles still interacting in the bedrock and creating ionised magma. Smoke billows upwards, with lightning occasionally flickering between plumes.

All this activity causes instruments to white out and controls to malfunction, even aboard an Ancients ship. The Travellers' vessel loses and regains power several times in a few seconds, lurching out of control and beginning to fall. Turbulence quickly adds spin into the equation, threatening to send the craft hurtling into the ionised pit below. Regaining control is more than a piloting task; it is necessary to re-route control signals, stabilise the power supply and apply corrections to the vessel's trajectory.

The Travellers can solve these problems any way they choose. Physically moving to the affected area is the obvious solution but remote systems might work and some of the Travellers may have psionic abilities that can help. For example, Telesperimentation could be used to fix problems with the control system without leaving the Traveller's nice safe crash harness.

Every 2D minutes, the Travellers can each make a new action. The pilot has a choice – attempt to break out of the gas plume or keep fighting the descent. The latter requires an Average (8+) Pilot check. The former is Very Difficult (12+). These checks are subject to DM-20 in the present circumstances – in other words, utterly impossible. The pilot must still try. Anyone not strapped in must make an Average (8+) Athletics check with a DM produced by the Effect of the pilot's failed check. Those who fail suffer 1D damage from buffeting.

The Travellers need to reduce the pilot's DM by their actions. Their ship is trying to maintain altitude and sometimes bounced upward by turbulence but overall it is descending towards the pit. All the pilot can do with the limited power and control available is delay the inevitable. The Referee should adjudicate actions of the Travellers and reward creativity. As with other parts of this campaign, the Travellers may be thinking outside the box and using their new abilities rather than mundane checks. This is to be encouraged and rewarded; fledgling gods should be above grubbing around under consoles with a screwdriver in their teeth!

Options the Travellers might try include but are not limited to:

Reboot the power system and/or the controls: Whilst dull and mundane, this will help a little. Any Traveller with relevant skills can perform one of these tasks automatically so long as they can access the relevant controls. Each action reduces the negative Pilot DM by -D3. Each can only be performed once.

Reroute control signals through channels least susceptible to interference and shut down the others: This could be done directly from engineering or bridge controls or remotely if the Traveller has relevant abilities or some kind of remote device. The Traveller makes an Average (8+) Electronics check, with the DM reduced by its Effect. This action can be repeated.

Concentrate power where it is most needed: This is another task that can be performed in a typical chief engineer manner or by more exotic means. Negative DM is reduced by the Effect of an Average (8+) Engineer check. This action can be repeated.

Protect the ship's systems against interference: It may be possible to reduce external interference by creating a counter-field or some kind of capacitance effect that absorbs the energy of the electrical discharges. If the Travellers can offer a plausible method – perhaps using the jump grid as an induction cage, or bleeding power through weapons capacitors and blasting it out of the main guns – the Referee should permit an Electronics or Engineer check and reduce the DM by Effect plus 1D for a suitably inventive solution.

Overload the drive to create a one-off pulse: It may be possible to fling the ship free in a desperate, mostly uncontrolled lunge. Rigging the drive requires an Engineer check, or perhaps Pilot. After that, it is a matter of timing the lunge to miss the ground and surrounding mountainsides. This requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check, which can be assisted by others plotting the ship's movement or providing additional information. Whilst bouncing off a mountainside and rolling into a pit of ionised magma would be a dramatic ending to the campaign the Referee is advised to assume that failure results in a minor crash doing 3Dx10 hull damage and 2D damage to occupants (reduced to 2D3 for those strapped in) and the situation not getting any better. If successful, the Travellers hurtle out of the plume and must get low, fast, to avoid detection. However, they are out of immediate danger and their ship's function return to normal.

An Intellectual Solution: Travellers of a more theoretical bent may be able to create a quick-and-dirty simulation of the turbulence, or just blag it and take a guess based on experience. The Referee should view such endeavours kindly, allowing a suitable check with whatever skills seem appropriate. This is likely to be Science of some sort, although there is a case to be made for Survival or Navigation. The Referee may allow a reduction equal to Effect or more for a particularly good idea.

Something Truly Dramatic: If the Travellers come up with a crazy but interesting solution, such as manually throwing an antimatter bomb out of the airlock to create a shockwave which will blast the ship clear, the Referee can apply the 'entertaining trumps plausible' rule. The Travellers should have to work for it however, coming up with some decent pseudoscience or a creative application of their abilities combined with a shockingly large amount of brute force. The Referee may decide a dramatic solution 'just works' or reduce the DM by an amount that seems reasonable.

At some point the pilot will be working with a suitably reduced negative DM that an escape becomes possible. The decision when to go for escape rather than survival may have to be finely judged as a failed check imposes damage as noted above… but staying in the plume can also be harmful. Once the Travellers escape they can make their way to ground level in the foothills, landing beside the Rokisni Alpha river. They are over 100 kilometres from the island where Ryau waits and using a powered vehicle risks detection. Fortunately, an alternative form of transport is available.

LAND YACHT

Once on the ground the Travellers have a new problem. Their destination is over 100 kilometres away and getting there presents difficulties. A ship will be detected, as will vehicles moving in this part of the steppe. It might be possible to blend in with what traffic there is near the city of Ihyuax but out here nothing is moving. Even a low-tech combustion engine vehicle would be obvious. The thin atmosphere makes most or all types of air vehicle impractical. The solution is to move the way the locals do – by river barge or land yacht.

There is a land yacht nearby and its operators are in trouble. They have been stranded for days due to damage they do not know how to repair. About half the occupants were killed in the days after the invasion and the rest have been struggling to survive since. Their tale is one of valiant attempts to overcome a catalogue of difficulties, culminating in the yacht grounding against an outcrop and becoming stuck. When the Travellers first catch sight of the yacht some of its operators are in the process of selecting what to take with them as they strike out on foot, whilst others are debating the possibility of dismantling the yacht to create a permanent settlement.

The concept of a static home is a radical idea for the people of Braudel as they have been nomadic for many generations. The mere fact it is being considered is an indication of how close to their wits' end the survivors are. A settlement might be possible in the short term but the poor soil of Braudel cannot support a static herd of yurfal for long. Nor is agriculture a viable option, except in a few small areas. A settlement anywhere would be a short-term survival measure and there is an additional problem in the present location. So close to the destroyed mountains, ash fall presents a severe threat every time the wind changes. Electrical storms have already damaged the yacht beyond its current occupants' ability to repair and would probably destroy any buildings sooner or later.

The yacht people need to move, although not all of them accept that. Leadership has fallen on a young man named Alyx. At 19 he is terribly inexperienced, but he was apprenticed to the yacht's travel-master and has some idea how to handle one. He has done better than might have been expected in getting this far but he has made mistakes that cost lives. Of the 24 people who originally crewed the land yacht, 11 adults remain. Some are injured or sick, and not everyone supports Alyx as their leader.

THE LAND YACHT BERCHU

Berchu is a typical example of the land yachts used by the people of Braudel. It is constructed of a form of plywood, shaved down very fine by expert hands and stuck together using glue extracted from the yurfal. Even the outer hull is surprisingly thin, however structural members are solid pieces of wood. The yacht is built in the manner of a catamaran, with two shallow hulls and a deck in between. It runs on great wheels whose axles are greased with fat from the yurfal – the smell takes some getting used to.

Motive power is provided by the wind, which on Braudel is a problem. The solution is ingenious and probably unique in Charted Space. In addition to a vast spread of sails, each hull has an s-rotor turbine located aft of the living areas. This device, built almost entirely from natural materials, constantly generates a trickle of electricity which is stored in batteries to provide lighting and sometimes motive power. Very little metal is used in the craft and almost all of it is in the turbine and associated systems.

The land yacht does have engines of a sort and can crawl along under electrical power for a few kilometres before needing to recharge for several days. More commonly, yachts use the wind in the manner of a sailing ship. Even running directly before the wind, it is rare to make more than one to two kilometres an hour. This is sufficient for most needs, given the people of Braudel are generally moving from one open area of steppe to another, differentiated only by the fact that its associated yurfal herd has not grazed and trampled the new area.

The people of the yacht are uneducated by interstellar standards but they know what they need to. The world is officially rated at TL5 but this represents the capabilities of a few expert crafters who know enough rule-of-thumb science to work metal and make engines.

The majority of the population are taught necessary things like how to ride and care for a yurfal, how to locate a good grazing spot and water on the steppe, and how to sing the traditional songs every night.

The crew of *Berchu* lost most of their knowledge when their experts were killed. Those who remain are ordinary people doing the best they can. They are not stupid – indeed, they are smarter than the average starfarer when it comes to low-tech living – but there are dangerous gaps in their knowledge. The situation in which they find themselves is unprecedented and all they can do is make common-sense decisions based on their observations.

The yacht has plenty of tools and a small herd of yurfal. At any given time a couple of the adults will be tending the herd, which has sensibly been moved a few kilometres away to better grazing land. Everyone else is either trying to fix the yacht or arguing about what to pack on the yurfal when they leave. The yacht itself has a considerable amount of damage. Two wheels need major repairs, which the crew do not know how to perform. In addition, there is hull damage and the port turbine is out of action. The yacht is tilted at a shallow angle where it ran ‘aground’ on the rocks during a storm.

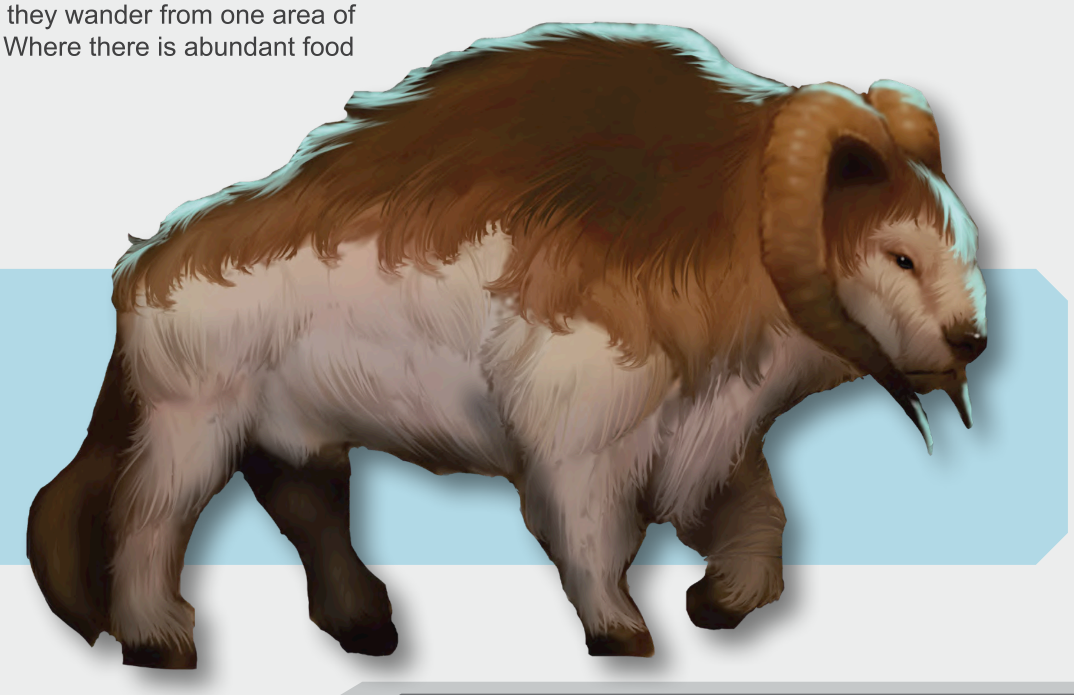
YURFAL

Yurfal are large herbivores, not unlike Terran bison in many ways. They are found in the wild in family groups of 6–10 adults plus some juveniles, with several family groups forming a herd. Herds generally stay together, in a loose sort of way, as they wander from one area of good grazing to another. Where there is abundant food the yurfal congregate in larger numbers, sometimes with several herds coming together. Families will change herds on these occasions as well as some individuals moving from one to another.

The yurfal provides most of the needs of the human population. Meat and hide are extensively used and dung is gathered to fertilise planted areas. Many small items are crafted from bone and sinew using TL5 techniques and tools, creating a hybrid technological culture which makes far more use of natural materials than metals. Some beasts are trained to be ridden or serve as pack animals and used by herders who keep track of the families associated with a land yacht or river barge. Sometimes herds are nudged from one grazing area to another but just as often land yachts follow herds wherever they choose to wander.

There are few large predators on Braudel and the yurfal has little need to fear any of them. A family group can drive off most threats if it stays together, so barring unusual circumstances the yurfal reacts by grouping. They do not fear humans but are unlikely to have encountered Droyne so would be wary and skittish. Even so, a little careful training would eliminate this reaction.

Animal	**Hits**	**Speed**
Yurfal	44	6m
Skills	Survival 2	
Attacks	Kick or Butt (2D), or Charge (4D)	
Traits	Armour +2, Large +3	
Behaviour	Herbivore, Grazer	



MAKING CONTACT

The yacht crew will be intrigued by anyone approaching, especially if they are coming from the direction of the mountains. If the ship lands close enough for them to see it they will be apprehensive but they know about starfarers from their oral histories. It is possible some of the crew may be singing one of the old songs as the Travellers arrive, comparing their appearance to that of the Scout Service personnel who came to study the folk of Braudel and thought they had not been spotted.

The locals speak Galanglic, of a sort, and are certainly willing to talk. They actually have too much food at present, due to casualties among the crew and will offer a meat-heavy stew and coarse bread to anyone who wants it. Depending on their attitude, the Travellers might make friends quickly or have to work at building a relationship but the yachters will accept help if offered. They want to get away from the mountains and if the Travellers can assist they are quite willing to take them to the centre of the steppe. Going there was always a possibility since the yacht needs additional crewmembers and the services of an expert crafter. The lake is a natural meeting point so other yachts may be there, as well as members of the river communities.

FIXING THE WHEELS

The survivors do not know how to make the super-light plywood used to construct most parts of a yacht. Expert crafters know that any piece of plywood – perhaps cannibalised from elsewhere on the yacht – can be unglued using a combination of gentle heat and moisture, and reshaped the same way. The secret of making the material is kept by only a few, and Travellers who perform this feat will be the subject of awe. This is not to say they will be treated as wizards but to know how to do such things and not be a specialist suggests the Traveller is some kind of polymath genius. Successfully fixing the wheels and other structural problems instantly elevates a Traveller to status among the highest-ranking members of Braudel society.

Actually fixing the wheels requires only some labour and the ability to shape plywood. Alternatively, some other material might be used. A small amount of offworld alloy is unlikely to be picked up by the occupiers' scanners, whereas emissions from a set of grav lifters certainly would, so solutions along the lines of strapping an air/raft to the underside of the yacht are too risky. The wheels could be crudely patched, which will work but create a lumpy ride. Not only will this impede navigation but it will impress the locals far less than using their own methods. However, if it saves lives they will be grateful.

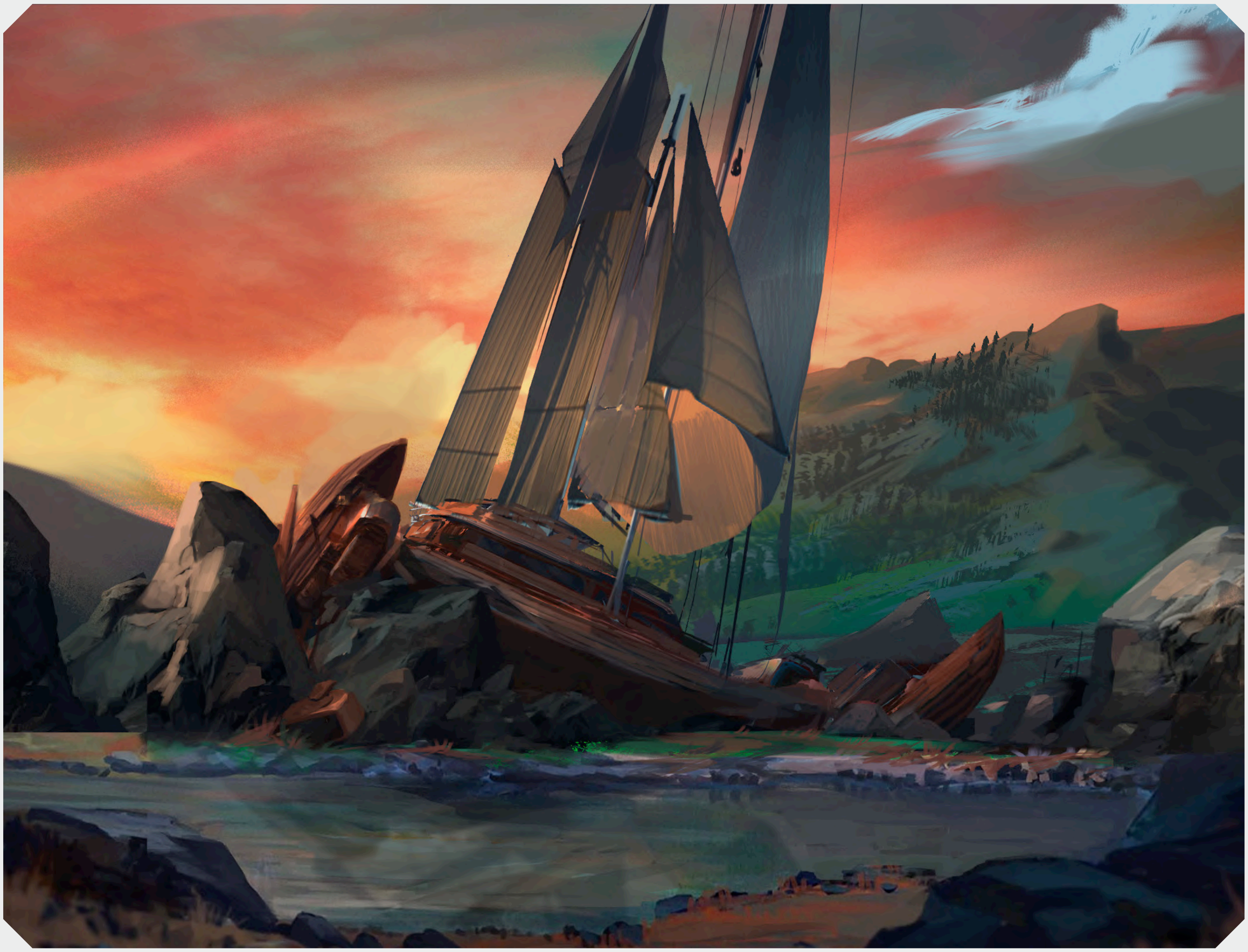
RESTORING POWER

The yacht is severely limited with only one turbine running. The amount of power generated is small at the best of times and quickly used up if the yacht moves against the wind. Even with two it is slow and cumbersome. The Travellers can get the turbine back into working condition easily enough with basic tools – anyone with the Electronics or Mechanic skill can do this in a few hours. This will really impress the locals, in the same way as making new plywood. However, the Travellers can do more. A successful Average (8+) Mechanic or Electronics check will permit a Traveller to improve the output of the turbine, capacity of the batteries and force generated by the engines by a noticeable margin. This is a matter of fine-tuning, optimising and using components efficiently and does not solve the basic problem; the turbines use the wind of a thin atmosphere world to generate power.

The Travellers could get more power in other ways. Basic photovoltaic cells – solar panels – might be constructed from materials they have in their ship. They could also borrow energy storage devices or advanced components from the vessel. Providing this is kept to a modest level it should not be detected and even if an anomaly showed up it might be discounted – a land yacht labouring through an electrical storm might throw up all manner of sensor ghosts. The Travellers could get away with plugging a modern energy storage device into the system. Providing they kept the output to a sensible level, they could power the yacht and drive it up to perhaps four or five kilometres per hour on level ground. This would be a rough ride but tolerable by the occupants and the yacht itself.

FREEING THE YACHT

Getting the land yacht off the rocks is a challenge but one that can be overcome with the simple application of force. Over-powering the engines, hauling on ropes and perhaps harnessing a few yurfal will permit the yacht to be dragged free of the rocks. This must be finely judged, however, to avoid additional damage. The Travellers might be best equipped to calculate how to



accomplish the task but the yacht is the responsibility of Alyx. He is now effectively its captain. If the Travellers save his yacht and give it to him he will feel forever diminished but if they advise him and allow him to give the orders they will win his friendship for life.

Either way, freeing the yacht is a simple matter of hard work and ingenuity. A Difficult (10+) Seafarer (sail) check is required to get it free without damage. Each point of negative Effect imposes 1D hours of work to fix damage before the yacht can get underway. The Travellers may question the use of Seafarer skill on land but it is the most appropriate. If they can make a good case for another skill they may use that.

ADVICE IF NEEDED

If the Travellers are about to do something that will bring down the occupiers on them, or they are just plain stuck, Ryau might make contact again. She is no Technician but has access to several. They can advise on whether a given measure will be detected or suggest solutions to practical problems. Receiving advice on how to glue pieces of wood together, by way of telepathy, from an alien hiding from a planetary invasion, is likely to be an unusual situation even by the standards of Travellers.

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE STEPPE

Once the yacht is freed and mobile again the Travellers can ride all the way to the lake. They will spot the occasional grav vehicle making a sweep of the area as far south as the lake but atmospheric turbulence and ionised ash make flight much further south than that a dangerous proposition. After the first incidents the occupiers stopped overflights, which were deemed pointless anyway.

If the Travellers do not do something that draws attention to themselves they should make it all the way to Lake Rokisni without serious incident. Running the yacht is a difficult business, especially for people having to learn new skills, and the herd has to be driven along in the same direction as well. Travellers who pitch in might find themselves riding a yurfal one day and clambering up rigging to adjust some of the stays another. Eventually, however, they will reach the lake shore.

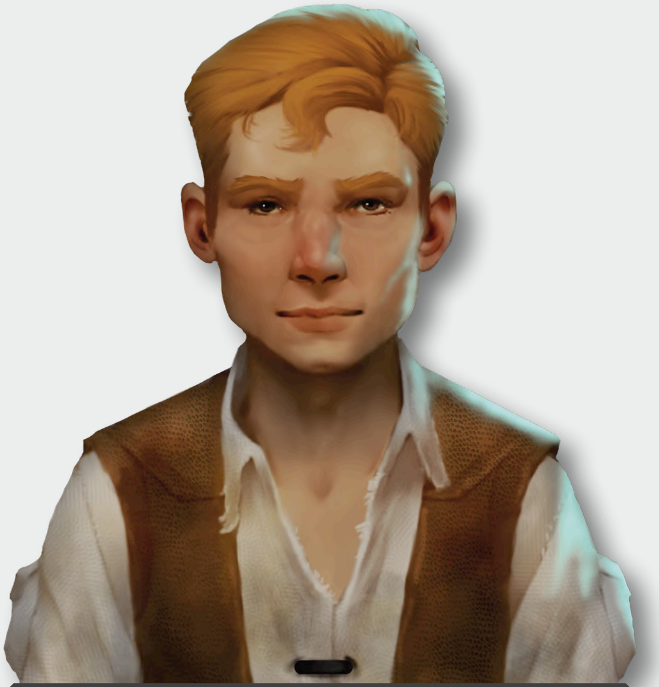
ALYX

Like most people on Braudel, Alyx does not have a surname. If it were necessary, he would be described as being 'of the people of the land yacht *Berchu*' but this is only important at a large gathering where there is some possible confusion over which Alyx is the one being referred to. That would be a once in a lifetime event even before the attack.

Alyx is young and inexperienced, but as an apprentice to the travel-master he is the only person aboard the yacht who knows how to navigate her and set her rigging such that she gains maximum motive power without losing a sail or snapping a stay. This places responsibility for everyone aboard on Alyx' shoulders. Braudel is a harsh world and everyone knows they must get their jobs done or perish. Alyx has never shirked his burden and has generally made reasonable decisions. He will not relinquish command to anyone unless the whole community decides to accept a new travel-master from a different yacht. Alyx alternates between desperately hoping this somehow happens and dreaming of leading his people to safety and becoming captain on a permanent basis.

Like most people on Braudel, Alyx owns a hunting bow. He is not very skilled with it, unlike some other members of the community who can bring down game from a moving yacht or yurfal-back. Most yachts have a couple of lever-action rifles and a few dozen rounds stashed away for some unspecified emergency, but ammunition is in short supply whereas arrows can often be reused. His jerkin is not armour as such but will provide a little protection against injury as well as keeping the wearer warm.

Violence is uncommon on Braudel, on any scale. Wars or large-scale conflicts are unknown and even interpersonal conflict generally stops short of violence as communities are small and the effects of an incident may be felt for years afterward. In short, the thought of social awkwardness prevents most incidents from escalating. For this reason Alyx finds the idea of using force against other people difficult to come to terms with. This attitude is common among the human population, making it unlikely anyone will actively join the coming fight. Passive assistance is more likely, however.



ALYX

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Human		Male		19
TRAITS			—	
STR	8	**INT**	8	**SKILLS**
DEX	5	**EDU**	3	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Gun Combat 0, Navigation 1, Seafarer (sail) 1, Survival 1
END	8	**SOC**	8	
WEAPONS			Bow (2D)	
ARMOUR			Hide Jerkin (+2)	

LAKE ROKISNI

The central lake is surrounded by marshland, making an approach impossible in a land yacht. However, Ryau knows the Travellers are coming and has sent boats to meet them at the shore. These are typical of the river-dwelling people; flat-bottomed vessels that can be poled through the marshes or rowed across the lake. There is another land yacht parked close to the lakeshore and a couple of barges out on the water. This represents a significant gathering, with perhaps 100 humans present at the island. This is over 10% of the human population before the attack and could well be all that remains.

The island is large and planted with areas of semi-cultivated crops. These are mostly a form of wild grass that gives a reasonable yield of something resembling corn. These areas are currently being harvested by the visiting people from both barges and land yachts. Many of the other plants that coexist with this semi-corn are taken for their food value on an opportunistic basis. It seems that whilst Braudel is not exactly bounteous, the world does provide for her people. How the dust and ash being poured into the atmosphere will affect that is an open question.

On the island are perhaps 200 Droyne. They have little in the way of supplies but some did manage to bring tools and weapons. These are deactivated to avoid detection. Their Leader-of-Leaders is Kinetav, previously a very junior Leader with limited responsibilities. It is the nature of Droyne society that a Leader is needed even when those available are less suited – in the eyes of an outsider – to take charge. Kinetav has been careful to observe the formalities of his new position as best he can. Stocks of wood, held to repair barges and land yachts, have been repurposed to create a small village of multiple-occupant huts surrounding a podium from which Kinetav can receive reports and give orders. He will expect the Travellers to present themselves before him there.

Someone unfamiliar with Droyne might marvel at how well these survivors have adapted to the destruction of their Oytrip. They show no outward signs of distress – unless the observer knows what to look for. Those who have been around Droyne a lot get a different impression. There is a lack of confidence underlying everything the survivors do. Workers and Technicians are slightly hesitant when carrying out even simple tasks; stoic Warriors are oddly twitchy – by Droyne standards at least.

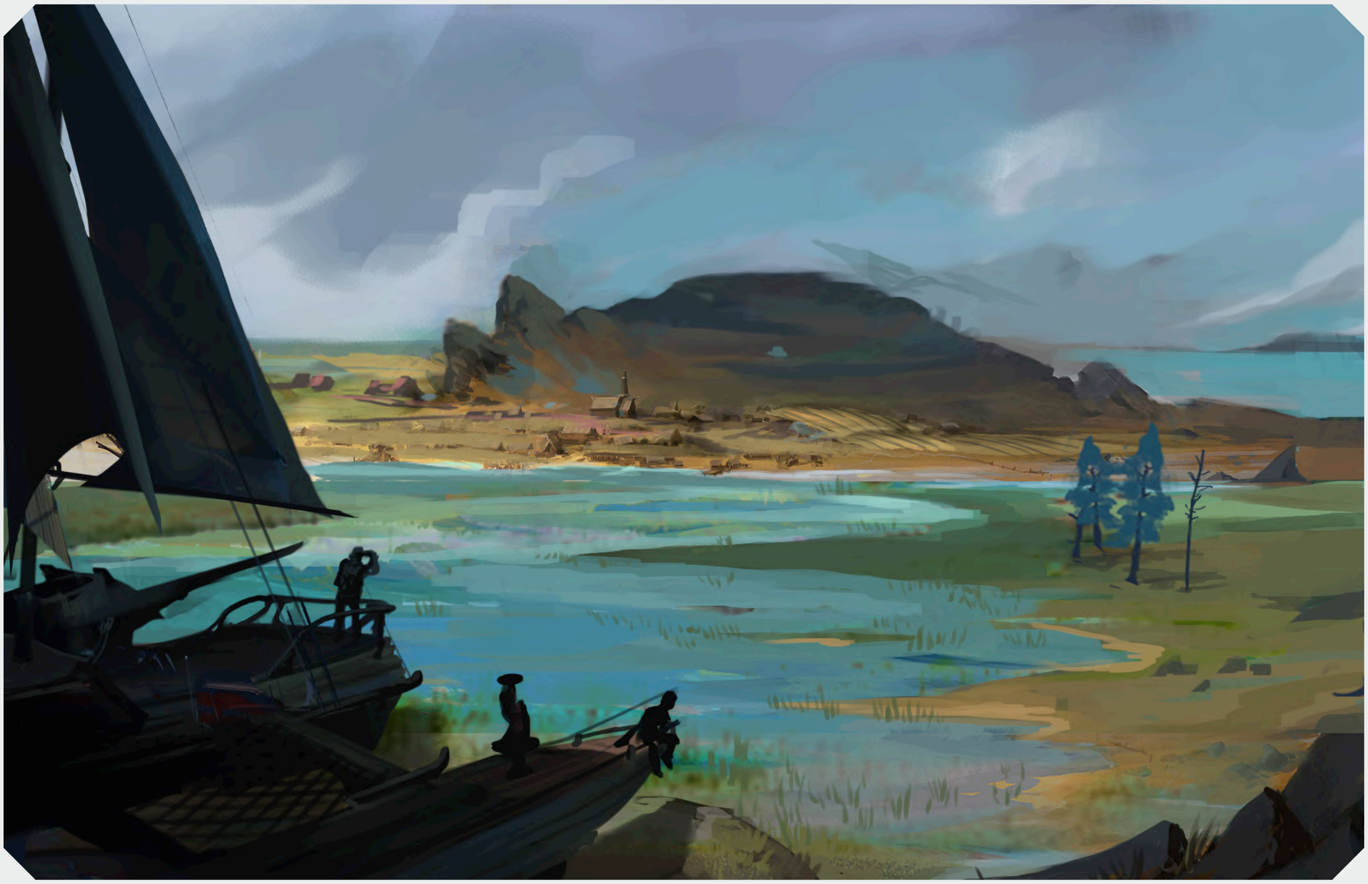
Kinetav's Sports greet the Travellers in suitable style. They extol his virtues but have little to work with. Leading a small group carrying out various minor tasks for the Leaders of the city is unglamorous but Kinetav has no great decisions to his name. He is completely dedicated to his mission of protecting Ryau and the other survivors but can see no way of fighting back against the invaders. The numbers, the balance of power… every piece of evidence indicates the world is lost. Kinetav is therefore focused on remaining hidden. He considers trying to obtain a spacecraft to be a viable option but cannot conceive of a way to overthrow the occupiers. He will need to be convinced it is possible.

PLANNING A REBELLION

Ryau has a different viewpoint. She is not a Leader and nobody would follow her even if she decided to take charge – which as a Drone she would never do. She believes the occupation can be undone, however, and she knows how. The key is to eliminate the upper stratum of Leaders-of-Leaders who have been conditioned, or to somehow break the conditioning they have received. Details, like how to get to any of these Leaders, are not the business of Drones.

With the help of her attendant Drones, Ryau can use her clairvoyance ability to show the Travellers what is going on at the city of Ihyuax. The war machine dominates the surrounding countryside, towering kilometres above the cratered surface. Grav platforms flit about its upper reaches, with Droyne Workers and Technicians engaged in fitting the machine's key systems. It is still mostly framework at present but some decks have been plated in and there are modules that clearly house weapon systems ranging from ground-level defences to ship-busters. The machine is operational but incomplete.

On the ground below, tens of thousands of Warriors are training. From time-to-time they stop and stand completely still wherever they happen to be, then adopt a neutral pose. They move together, forming a



great phalanx with every member a precise distance from the others. Then they… move. Travellers familiar with Droyne know that synchronised movement is part of their culture. The exact reason for this is not known to outsiders. It is not military drill, nor purely aesthetic in the manner of synchronised swimming. The best analogy most researchers can offer is that these movements are the equivalent of a choir singing together. It may be that synchronised movement is a way that groups of Droyne can affirm their 'sameness' to one another.

Be that as it may, there is something different about these movements. They are impressive, conducted on an incredible scale, but there is something not quite right. Movements are quicker or slower, larger or smaller than they should be. Travellers may get the sense that the Oytrip's very soul is being tormented by this forced obedience to Quisling leaders. On a practical note, the movement sessions seem to take place on a predictable, if not regular, pattern. There are periods where all the available Warriors and most of the other castes are all busy. This might favour an infiltration attempt.

Ryau's plan is ambitious and ordinarily she would not even consider it. However, there are no alternatives. Within the war machine is a chamber used by Tsyamoykyo to speed up the conditioning of his victims. It is close to the top, in a section more or less completed. Not coincidentally it is close to the ship teleporter, enabling Tsyamoykyo to move quickly between his fortress and his command chamber on Braudel. If the chamber can be seized it will be possible to mass-decondition the Leaders of the Oytrip. Ryau cannot do this, however. It would take a very special mind – or minds – to gain control of the command chambers' psi-enhancing capabilities. She senses that the Travellers, somehow, possess such minds.

RYAU'S TUTELAGE

Ryau can sense that the Travellers are developing great mental powers but there are obstacles along the way. The Travellers are in the first stage of their development, correlating to a limit of 100 RI points. Additional points can be obtained but are held rather than being spent; the Traveller simply cannot push any further with their current knowledge. Ryau can help the Travellers break through this barrier, although she warns that there are more obstacles ahead.

Over the course of a day or so, Ryau telepathically assists the Travellers in modifying their thinking in a way that removes the first barrier. As they learn more about their powers they can progress to a maximum of 200 RI, at which point a new barrier is encountered. Ryau cannot help with that or any later ones; the Travellers must seek other sources of wisdom or moments of revelation.

There is no immediate effect unless the Travellers have amassed additional RI points beyond 100. In that case, all held points can be spent immediately. If this results in multiple advances the Travellers receive them all in a single uplift event. This will be painful if rapid and major physical changes occur, and distracting if mental development is in progress.

Ryau will also show the Travellers how they can remain connected to her through the control chamber, which will allow her to augment their efforts to decondition the Leaders. Her supporting Drones will also lend their strength and may be able to defend the Travellers in the event of psionic counter-action. All of this is subject to the agreement of Kinetav, of course. He is the Leader of this community and his word is law. The Travellers may be able to convince him the effort is worth making. Otherwise he will veto any involvement and the Travellers will be on their own.

PERSUADING KINETAV

By now the Travellers must be aware of the importance of ritual and formality in Droyne society. They have a disadvantage when dealing with Kinetav, in that they are outsiders. If he were more experienced, with a wider-galaxy viewpoint he might be more amenable to their approaches but all he has ever known is insular Droyne society. The only outsiders he has heard of are the relatively primitive humans of Braudel. Nevertheless, the Travellers must try.

An audience is not hard to get if the Travellers know to go through a Sport or Ryau does it for them. Kinetav will listen to what they have to say providing they couch it in terms he can understand and relate to. He does not really comprehend the bigger picture and thinks in terms of his Oytrip rather than protecting the people of other worlds. Indeed, he has come to believe that his Oytrip has shrunk to the size of his immediate followers and that everyone else is already lost.

The Travellers will need to make a good argument that the survival and continuation of Kinetav's Oytrip depends on wider issues. One possible option is to ask whether he would tolerate a group of Droyne leaving his Oytrip to live on the other side of the island. In fact he would, if their Leaders believed that was for the best… but if the interests of his own people were threatened then former membership of the Oytrip means nothing.

Another option is to simply show Kinetav what happens to those who defy Tsyamoykyo. The Travellers might use telepathy either directly or through Ryau, sending him into a state like the psionic dreams they have encountered. Forceful changing of his mind might be possible in such a state, if the Travellers understood the proper mechanisms, but should not be necessary. The Travellers can narrate what they show Kinetav. If it is true, to the best of their knowledge, then there is no need to try to convince him it is. Only if the Travellers present information they know to be false will they have to effectively lie. This requires an Average (8+) INT check with Telepathy as a DM.

What the Travellers are doing when they lie in this manner is to create a false memory and present it as if they think it is real. Playing around with this concept results in a new revelation – it is easier to present something as true if you heard it from someone else than making it up on the spot. This is because when a Traveller listens to a wild tale of the sort told by certain people, they imagine what they are hearing. Presenting the memory of this imagined reality is easier than creating one from whole cloth.

This may be useful later. Travellers who have created false memories by thinking through their story in detail or telling themselves – or others – the tale out loud will present a fuller and more convincing narrative with less jarring out-of-place details. Someone who has deluded themselves over a long time of certain 'realities' will present them as real even psionically. The Travellers could use this knowledge to prepare for the deconditioning attempt and it will be useful in deceiving Tsyamoykyo when the time comes.

Convincing Kinetav is ultimately a matter for roleplaying and narrative rather than checks. He cannot be inspired by a great speech or majestic poem, nor can he be browbeaten or bullied. Reverse psychology will not work. The only prospect is cold, hard logic containing two factors: firstly that the Oytrip has no future if Tsyamoykyo is not defeated, and secondly that this is possible. If the Travellers go about this the right way Kinetav will become part of the planning process before he has actually decided to help.

Kinetav knows there are other Droyne survivors hiding in the forest at the headwaters of the Rokisni Gamma river; perhaps a few hundred or the low thousands. He asks – and genuinely wants to know the answer – if the Travellers can come up with a plan to use them. What could they achieve? How can they be armed? Few will have escaped with weapons. How best could they be used, assuming there is an intent that some survive? What if they were all expended? What then?

Kinetav is not throwing obstacles in the way; he is exploring the Travellers' plan to see if it is workable. This is how his decision will be made; a workable plan and a need to execute it. If the Travellers do not think of it themselves, Kinetav will start offering details as discussion points. However, it is best if this scene is roleplayed with the Travellers not initially realising they are creating the desperate plan that will liberate or doom Braudel.

The problems Kinetav knows about, and the possible solutions, are as follows:

OPPOSITION

There are tens of thousands of Droyne Warriors around the war machine, along with other creatures. Getting to Ordssess directly would be impossible, and in any case removing him or breaking his conditioning will simply cause command to devolve onto another Quisling. This means that approaches such as long-range assassination will not be effective and kidnap is unlikely to achieve more than bring down thousands of Warriors on whatever location the Travellers take him to.

The war machine is also guarded by Warriors but they are scattered here and there in small groups. These could be overcome by a rapid, high-firepower assault or perhaps drawn away by a deception. The best time to attempt this is during one of the synchronised-motion instances. These are not regular but they may be predictable. If so, there will be a window of opportunity during which a force might get into the vicinity of the war machine. However, vehicles – even if the attackers had any – would be shot down before they could approach. A stealthy approach on foot might be better, although there is open ground to cover, potentially under fire.

Whilst casualties on both sides are inevitable, and Droyne Warriors are willing to die for their Oytrip from the moment they are casted, losses will impact the future. Every Warrior put out of action in the fight for the war machine is one less to fight Tsyamoykyo and defend the Oytrip in the future. Any amount of casualties is acceptable as an alternative to failing to break the leaders' conditioning but Kinetav – inexperienced as he is – can clearly see that a bloody victory might doom his community in the long run.

THE WAR MACHINE

The war machine is over four kilometres high. Its main components are in place but held within a framework that is slowly being put together by teams of workers and robots. The overall form is a square-based pyramid, more or less, for most of the device's height, with bulges for weapon and system mounts. Some of these are designed to defend the machine from planetary-conflict threats such as missiles, grav vehicles and projectiles. The larger ones are for orbital defence. There is a colossal meson weapon buried deep in the heart of the pyramid.

The corners rise to four pyramidal points, with a flat area between them. This is the ship teleporter, which uses projectors mounted on the corner pyramids. The corners of the main structure contain grav lifts used to move between levels and hold anti-starship weapons including annihilator beams, and shielding devices to protect the machine. Immediately below the teleporter is the command level, with accommodation for dignitaries and a suitably ornate command chamber for Tsyamoykyo. Subsidiary chambers house important functions such as weapons direction and a psionic interface allowing mass telepathic contact.

The war machine is supported on grav lifters and can move at up to 200 kilometres per hour at need. It could in theory reach orbit, and can certainly engage starships at high-orbital distances. At present it is attached to an extensive set of galleries which allow access to the lower couple of hundred metres of the structure. The open framework allows agile Workers to scramble around outside the large components, whilst robots bring heavy items and tools up to them.

The thin air of Braudel becomes unable to support human respiration without additional oxygen at about three kilometres above sea level, although this can vary between individuals. Droyne have a smaller lung capacity and will begin to suffer hypoxia at about 1.5–2 kilometres above sea level. Short periods of activity are possible at these altitudes and above, but discomfort is immediate and serious effects begin shortly afterward. These include dizziness, disorientation, inability to concentrate and eventually collapse. The Droyne of Braudel did not have many vacc suits or high-altitude equipment at the time of the invasion and despite rushing more into production supplies are limited. As a result, relatively small numbers of Workers and Technicians are available for high-level work and few Warriors can operate outside the closed areas.

This may be turned into an advantage by the Travellers in various ways. Opening a high section will cause rapid depressurisation. Whilst this is less serious than explosive decompression in space it could fling some guards out or disrupt what they are trying to do. Personnel inside the machine are unlikely to have breathing equipment available so might be confused or even rendered unconscious by such measures. Their ability to mount a coherent response will certainly be impaired and most will be engaged in trying to get air rather than fighting.

A PLAN?

The Travellers can try anything they want, with or without assistance. The attempt to convince Kinetav to assist is an opportunity to come up with a plan. The Referee can use his questions about how to overcome the various difficulties encountered along the way to drop hints to the Travellers about resources available and the impossibility of some avenues of attack.

If the Travellers can come up with a fighting force of some kind they may be able to gain control of the war machine for long enough to decondition the Oytrip's leaders. Grav vehicles would not make it to the top of the machine without being shot down, so the attack has to come at ground level. Striking when the Warriors are engaged in one of their massed synchronised movements will keep them out of the way for a while, which means the assault force can get onto the lower levels of the war machine. From there, the corner grav lifts will give access to the command level.

The ground-level Warriors will rush to defend the war machine but only a few can be conveyed to the upper levels at a time using vehicles. The rest will have to use the lifts and will therefore be behind the assault force. They will arrive in a constant stream but it may be possible to hold them off at the shaft heads or improvise a way to block or render useless one or more of the lift shafts.

Ultimately the assault force will need to seize the command level and hold it long enough to complete the deconditioning. Time will be tight, for more than one reason. Not only will the assault team be trapped on the top of an artificial flying mountain with an endless stream of Warriors ascending to kill them but the war machine will probably be turned on the survivor populations. Kinetav has been advised by his best Technicians that the electrical interference in the atmosphere will make locating targets at range difficult and might interfere with the function of missiles. Direct-fire weapons will not be affected, so in all probability the war machine will be moved over the mountains to commence a methodical destruction of the remaining survivors.

Overall, the situation is that the Travellers have a narrow window of opportunity and must succeed in their attempt or perish. It would be advisable to approach stealthily or by deception, then act quickly and decisively. The assault will be a race to get control of the war machine and ultimately the planet – a race with no second prize.

ASSISTANCE

If the Travellers fulfil both criteria – a need to act and a chance of success – then Kinetav will assist them to the best of his abilities. He has to balance his responsibility to protect Ryau and the other survivors against the need to strike at their enemies but ultimately decides this is the same thing. An even more junior Leader will be assigned to protect the remnants of the Oytrip but as far as Kinetav can see if he does not succeed they will perish anyway sooner or later. He will gather a few Warriors and some other castes to support them, and accompany the Travellers when they go to gather more. In the meantime, Ryau will contact the Leaders of the survivor group at the headwaters and pass on Kinetav's conclusions. By the time the Travellers arrive there could be an army waiting for them.

If the Travellers do not manage to convince Kinetav they will have to manage without him. This is doable; the Leaders at the headwaters can still be convinced. However, time to prepare will have been lost, which may reduce the chances of success. Either way, Kinetav orders the survivor Droyne to leave the island as it is an obvious target. His tiny Oytrip will have to be broken down and scattered between any barges and land yachts that will take them.

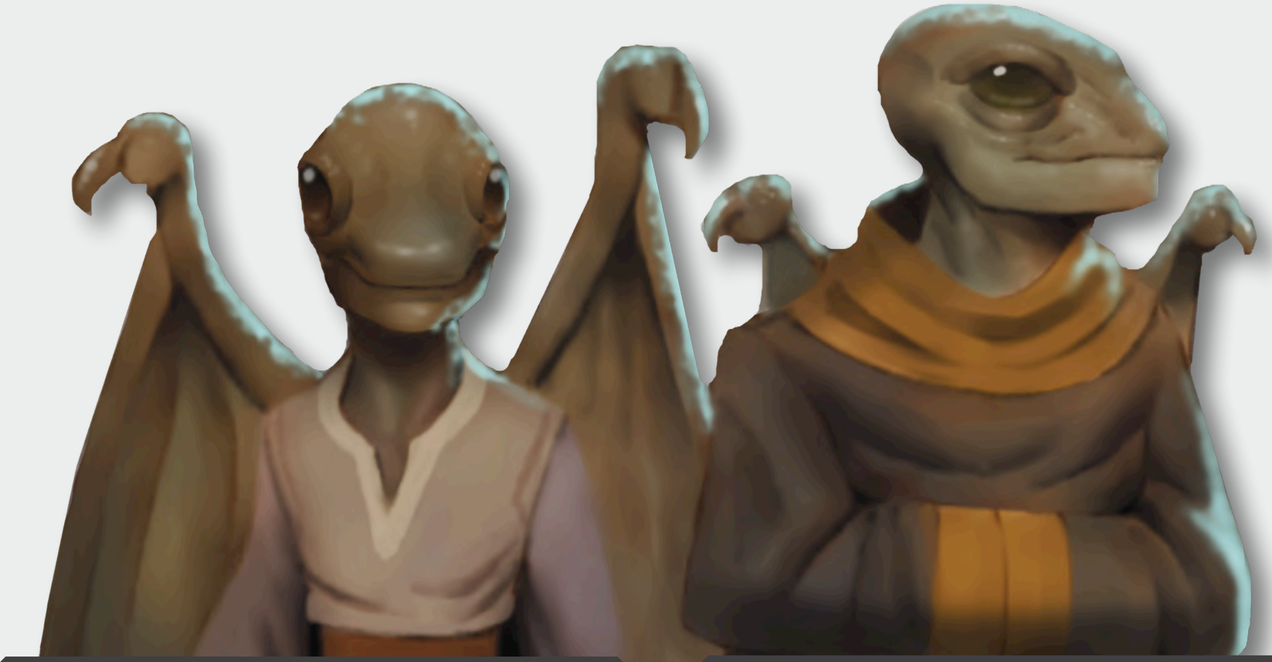
KINETAV AND RYAU

Kinetav is a very junior Leader but a Leader nonetheless. He commands and his Oytrip obeys. He does not wish for a more senior Leader to be found but knows it would be for the best. In the meantime he accepts the burden without ego or humility. His task is clear and he will fulfil it to his dying breath. Kinetav might come across as pompous to someone who does not understand Droyne society, since he insists on ceremony and formality that would normally be associated with the greatest of Leaders. However, this is not about his ego but his duty. The ceremony and ritual is part of leading an Oytrip and is every bit as important as ordering Workers to obtain food or Warriors to patrol the surrounding countryside.

Ryau is equally aware of her station and not at all receptive to insane suggestions that she take charge. She is wiser and far more experienced than Kinetav but is not a Leader. It is her duty to advise and Kinetav's to listen. He fulfils that duty and all is well.

There is no such thing in Droyne society as a Leader ignoring good advice just to show they are in charge and not the advisor. A Leader may have a different perspective to a Drone, and might consider advice to be just a part of a wider picture, but wilfulness for its own sake is non-existent. Thus Ryau is confident that Kinetav will make the best decisions he can, and it is her duty to give him the information he needs to do so – and not second-guess him.

Ryau is intrigued by the Travellers. She sees some of what is happening to them and wonders what the long-term implications will be. Her Oytrip has always been opposed to dominance by the Ancients but at least the Ancients understood the ways of the Droyne. What might a future be like in which non-Droyne ascended to that level of power? Of course, for the Oytrip to exist in that future the current crisis must be resolved, so Ryau has no choice but to work with the Travellers and hope for a benign future.



RYAU

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	Female	—

TRAITS	—

STR	3	INT	14	SKILLS
DEX	5	EDU	12	Awareness 6, Caste (Drone) 5, Clairvoyance 5, Telepathy 6
END	4	PSI	15	

KINETAV

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	Male	—

TRAITS	—

STR	4	INT	11	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	9	Caste (Leader) 2, Tactics (military) 1, Telepathy 1
END	5	PSI	10	

EVERY GUN ON THE PLANET

Getting to the headwaters of the river is a lengthy journey. The Travellers could walk or persuade Alyx to convey them in his high-speed (for a land yacht) vehicle. They might travel by barge or small boats, or by some other means. One option is to learn to ride a yurfal. They are used as mounts by the human population and are generally biddable. What means the Travellers use is immaterial so long as they get where they are going.

If the Travellers have won the cooperation of Kinetav, he and his entourage will accompany them on the journey. Ryau will not, but she is able to set up a telepathic link between the Travellers and a remote viewpoint at the headwaters of the river. This will enable the Travellers to interact with and perhaps guide the preparations for attack on the war machine.

There are a handful of humans in the forest, most of whom live in the area permanently. This small population includes a high proportion of the expert crafters on the entire planet – one small antimatter bomb lobbed over the mountains would send Braudel back to the stone age. Those who do not make items and equipment support them by hunting or semi-wild agriculture. There are quite a lot of yurfal here, many of which are used to being ridden at least occasionally. This creates some additional possibilities.

It would be possible to mount part of the assault force on yurfal as a sort of rather clumsy cavalry. Whilst hardly precise or nimble, these mounts would enable part of the force to smash through opposition and reach the base of the war machine quickly. The herd could also be used to cover an advance, at least for a time. Herds wander through the mountain passes and might serve as both visual shield and a means of confusing thermal sensors. The beasts could be stampeded as a way of breaking through some of the enemy's Warriors.

The crafters are working flat out to create weapons for the assault force. The human population has either joined the assault force or donated their weaponry but there is little of it and very few Droyne retained their arms when they fled the city. At present, the assault force has hundreds more Warriors than it does weapons. A handful of advanced plasma rifles and laser carbines, plus the lever-action rifles of the human population, represent pretty much every gun on the planet, but still 95% of the force is unarmed.

Hunting bows are a partial solution but there are only a few of those and no time to make many more. The only answer is hand weapons. Droyne have an aversion to close combat but there really is no choice at this point. Warriors are currently practicing with repurposed axes and knives or custom-made spears and lances. They are unskilled but dedicated and trying hard. Some may end up going into battle with nothing more than a club or a bag of rocks to throw but they can always pick up a weapon from a fallen comrade. The scene is in equal parts laughable and tragic; the people of Charted Space going up against an Ancients war machine armed with sticks and stones. There is a promise here, if the Travellers can see it – oppressors will never triumph whilst there is someone willing to fight them. Rocks are plentiful on most worlds.

RAISING AN ARMY

The Travellers can organise the assault force any way they like but some form of organisation is going to be necessary. There is no time to organise a human-style army and that model would not work well with Droyne warriors anyway. Droyne typically fight in small groups, with larger forces of loosely coordinated but highly cooperative smaller groups. Detailed orders and complex evolutions are not the Droyne way. Each small unit is highly effective and there is a general consensus towards the accomplishment of goals. Droyne are not deterred by casualties unless their Leaders deem the endeavour not worth the effort and smashing one small unit makes little difference. The Travellers can rely on their force to fight to the last Droyne, unless ordered to retire.

Only Warriors fight but Workers and Technicians may be present to carry out appropriate tasks. Normally this would be casualty extraction and logistics, as well as operation of complex systems, but under the circumstances there may be little for the specialists to do. They may still be included in the force as yurfal-wranglers and living shields for the Warriors if this enhances the probability of success. Leaders may be incorporated in parties of Warriors or command teams containing a mix of castes.

The basic organisational unit for Droyne forces is the 'Party', or Eyotwyu. The Oynprith term for a combat force of this size translates as 'Hunting Party' for archaic reasons. Unless a Leader is present in the group there is no formal rank structure in a Hunting Party; Warriors cooperate well without any being officially in charge. The standard tactical unit is a 'Group', or Aaumyats, which is usually made up of around six parties. A Group will include a command party with a Leader, several hunting parties of Warriors and any additional parties made up of specialists or support personnel. A Group will thus have about 36 members, of whom most will be either Battling or Guarding Warriors. The former specialise in aggressive manoeuvres and attacks whilst the latter are more suited to holding what has been captured, protecting flanks and ensuring chains of supply and command remain intact. Above Group level, standard composition is a 'Force', or Drefusk. In accordance with the auspicious nature of the number six, a Drefusk normally contains six Groups with a nominal strength of 216 Droyne.

There are about 3,000 Droyne survivors in the headwaters region, of whom a little under 500 are Warriors or junior Leaders serving as Leaders-of-Warriors. This is sufficient to form around 80 Parties or 13 Groups. There are in addition about 900 Technicians and Workers who could be sent along with the fighting force. They will not engage in combat and will quickly be killed, but every blow or plasma bolt they absorb is a Warrior still fighting. About 20 humans are also available and about 400 yurfal if the Travellers think to make use of them.

The Travellers might try any manner of approaches. They might create pure Warrior Parties and Groups, then assign them a screen of Workers and Technicians organised into Parties of six with the intent of using these as cannon-fodder. Whilst callous, this does shield the fighting troops for a short time. The default option, if the Travellers do not trouble themselves with trivialities like organisation, is that a few Warriors are assigned to Parties made up of Workers and Technicians and most are formed into diluted combat Groups.

An independent Party will have one or at most two Warriors plus a mix of Technicians and Workers. These are not mere cannon-fodder; it is possible that the assault might reach areas where Technicians can be useful, perhaps gaining control of robots or internal systems. Meanwhile, Workers can evacuate casualties, drag loose materials to block corridors, or act as decoys to draw fire.

Within the combat Groups, most Parties will have four Warriors, plus a Technician and a Worker or Leader. The Group will contain four Parties and two more with the same composition as an independent Party. This gives a fighting strength of about 18 Warriors to a Group of 36 Droyne. Each Group is weaker in combat than a pure Warrior force but may be more flexible and resilient. There are also a lot more of them.

This force structure uses all the available Warriors and about half the Technicians and Workers. It is sufficient to create three Forces, each with a fighting strength of about 110 Warriors. The remainder are distributed among specialist Parties, command Parties and independent fighting Parties. Overall this is about 1,000 personnel with which to take on the entire Oytrip.

The Travellers may want to organise and plan the attack down to the last boot knife and if so the Referee should indulge them. Most groups will be more general in their approach, giving rather vague orders or assigning loose goals. The Force Roles table can be used to create a force of any size and the Travellers might think of others or combine these.

Force Roles

Role	Notes
Combat	Combat units are intended to engage the enemy at their best advantage – or least disadvantage. Unless directed otherwise they will do whatever brings the best short-term advantage. This might include driving enemies from away to take pressure off another group, retiring to regroup, flanking an enemy force that is attacking allies, or otherwise making sensible tactical decisions with a view to defeating enemy combat forces rather than attaining any specific aim.
Assault	Assault units are tasked with seizing an objective from the enemy. This implies close assault tactics but if the hostiles can be tricked into leaving or cleared by sharpshooters, the end result is the same. Overall, Assault units are more aggressive than Combat units.
Sharpshooter	Sharpshooter units give support to others with long-range weapons fire. They will, by default, seek a position of cover or concealment. Enemy sensors will find them quickly, however, so sharpshooters may be forced to shift positions after engaging a target and not always be available.
Skirmisher	Skirmisher units are in many ways the opposite of assault formations. Their role is to harass and confuse the enemy whilst refusing to be drawn into a decisive engagement. Used well, skirmishers may be able to draw off many times their number in enemy troops but if cornered will be overrun.
Technical	Technical units have minimal combat capability and will usually be assigned a non-combative mission. This can be general, such as 'find and gather weapons or anything useful' or very specific, such as reaching a particular control hub and making use of it.
Worker	Worker units have minimal combat capability and will normally be assigned supporting tasks such as fetching ammunition or blocking a corridor with building materials.
Leadership	Leadership units have a modest combat capability but for the most part provide direction to others.
Guarding	Guarding units may be combat forces assigned to protect a position or deny passage to the enemy, or could be a blocking force with virtually no combat capability. In this case 'guarding' means taking fire meant for combat personnel.
Yurfal Cavalry	Some units might be mounted on yurfal for mobility or in an attempt to create combat cavalry. Yurfal can move faster than humans or Droyne and could be used to get ahead of an enemy reaction force, or perhaps to charge right through it.
Yurfal Wranglers	Yurfal without mounted fighters might be used as a screen to hide the attacking force, stampeded at the enemy, or in some other inventive way. Personnel will need to be assigned to guide and control the beasts. This force might then switch role, perhaps sending a couple of hundred yurfal at the enemy, then charging in behind them or making an attempt to kidnap a Leader.
Decoy	Decoy forces present themselves as something else. This might be general, in the sense of a force just trying to make itself look like a threat, or very specific if the Travellers have come up with a trick they want to try.
Specialist	Specialist forces will usually be tailored to a particular role. For example, a unit tasked with stealing vehicles and attacking the enemy with them would need to contain individuals capable of operating vehicles, as well as fighters to protect the specialists and overcome resistance.

OPPOSITION AND ALLIES

The Travellers face two groups of opposing forces. The largest is the Oytrip of Vaykouh, led by Ordssess and others who have been conditioned to loyalty and cannot act against the interests or instructions of Tsyamoykyo. There are tens of thousands of Warriors in the city and thousands more on the surface. They are equipped to TL15 standards and will fight fanatically so long as their Leaders command them to.

The strategy used by these Warriors is simple – counterattack and attempt to drive the Travellers' forces away from the war machine. If anyone gets inside, the Vaykouh Warriors will pursue them with the intent of killing or capturing them. They are not concerned with taking control of anything inside the war machine; their mission is purely one of repelling the attackers. However, Yaskiay will instruct Ordssess to have his Warriors secure areas that have fallen to the Travellers and then send personnel to staff them.

Once the obedience-conditioning has been broken, this will cease – but not immediately. Ordssess and his peers will be confused for a time and their Warriors will have no new orders. They will continue to fight until Ordssess orders them to fall back. At that point they will defend themselves and the city but are no longer interested in the war machine or in making attacks. It may be possible to convince Ordssess to join the fight against Yaskiay but he will take some convincing. Going against Yaskiay and his master is a big step and Ordssess is unwilling to leap into an unknown situation without gathering information and having his Drones conduct the appropriate rituals.

VAYKOUH FORCES

The Warriors of the Oytrip are equipped with a more advanced version of the fighting-armour used by many Oytrips. It varies in that it does not have provision to mimic the use of wings by the wearer, as this feature would be of little use on Braudel. The armour itself is very similar to standard combat armour, featuring a flexible base layer with rigid armour plates, life support and cooling systems, and tactical displays. Power cells are good for 24 hours of operation. This is longer than most species could stand being encased in armour but if the suit is donned with the right ceremony a Warrior's mental resilience is boosted sufficiently to make long-duration operations tolerable. A small percentage of Warriors have a grav-assisted version of the suit, enabling them to fly for up to four hours.

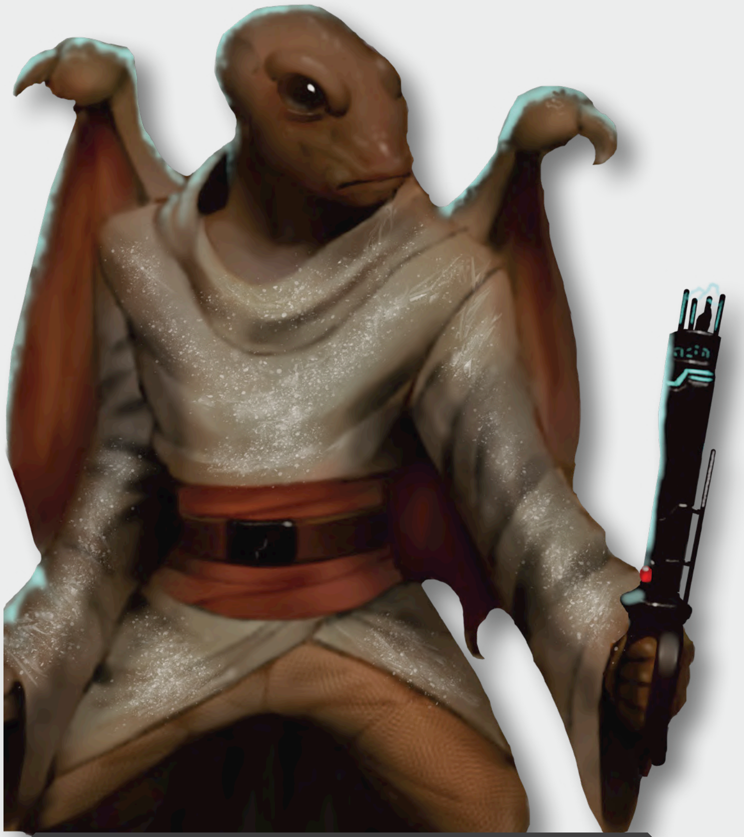
The standard weapon used by the Oytrip's Warriors is a focused plasma carbine which can be used in one or both hands. It may be paired with an eclipse shield, a large but lightweight shield said to resemble a planet in partial eclipse. The concave secondary edge permits a Warrior to use a firearm in the other hand, turning his body to receive protection, then angling back to shoot. Eclipse shields are almost always near-transparent, giving observers the impression of a shimmering force-field protecting their users. In melee, an eclipse shield functions as a normal shield but against firearms the user is treated as being in cover. A second Droyne can shelter behind the shield of another but cannot make attacks without moving out from behind this cover.

Warriors operate in groups of six, or five and a junior Leader. They cooperate in silence for the most part, working as a highly effective team and coordinating loosely with other teams. This can lead to disconnects, where one group advances just as another begins a flanking movement and opens up a gap in the line but such problems are usually solved in moments by unspoken agreement.

The Warriors of Vaykouh ultimately answer to Ordssess. He is a wise and experienced Leader-of-Leaders, who dedicated his life to guarding against what has befallen his Oytrip. At present he cannot disobey Tsyamoykyo in any way but once the conditioning is broken Ordssess will re-evaluate the situation. He has three options – decide that obedience is the best course of action after all, fight against Tsyamoykyo, or commit ritual suicide so that someone else can make better decisions. Which he chooses may depend on whether the situation seems winnable. He will probably choose to step aside (and die) once the immediate crisis is over but which way he directs the Oytrip in the meantime depends on how well the Travellers seem to be doing.

It is possible that Ordssess' obedience conditioning was not 100% effective. He has done as bidden in providing personnel and materials to construct the war machine, and his forces are ready to defend it. Yet he failed to see any possibility of resistance materialising. Perhaps some rebellious part of his subconscious chose not to look in the right places. Be that as it may, Ordssess is not a traitor in the human sense and would not feel guilt about what he has done. He was defeated by a superior mental force and made to serve; he had no control over that so it is not relevant – nor would his people consider him a traitor. However, he is the Leader who was in charge when this happened and different decisions might have prevented it. His questions are not about how to live with guilt but whether he is the best choice to lead the Oytrip.

The Travellers might expect Ordssess to try to expunge his failures with some grand gesture like leading a suicidal attack on the war machine or even the stronghold of Tsyamoykyo. However, that is not the Droyne way. Ordssess will continue to lead, or he will not. His choices will be made dispassionately and based solely on what is best for his Oytrip. The Travellers may be able to present arguments one way or the other if they can find a way to approach Ordssess.



VAYKOUH WARRIOR

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	—	—

TRAITS	—

STR	10	**INT**	4	**SKILLS**
DEX	11	**EDU**	2	Caste (Warrior) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Tactics (military) 1
END	10	**PSI**	6	

WEAPONS	Plasma Carbine (6D)
ARMOUR	Fighting-Armour (+15), Eclipse Shield

ORDSSESS, LEADER-OF-LEADERS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Droyne	Male	—

TRAITS	—

STR	3	**INT**	11	**SKILLS**
DEX	7	**EDU**	12	Awareness 2, Caste (Leader) 5, Telepathy 3
END	4	**PSI**	12	

WEAPONS	Leader-Rod (3D, Zero-G)
ARMOUR	Shimmering Robe with built-in shields

SHIMMERING ROBE

Based on the same technology as the shimmersuit, these long robes are made from a fabric that has an iridescent sheen. They are made from an elastic material which stretches to accommodate a wide range of wearers.

A shimmering robe completely absorbs all laser attacks harmlessly, while all other attacks are reduced to ¼ normal damage, rounding down.

YASKIAY'S FORCES

The forces of Yaskiay are assigned to operate and protect the war machine. The planet is relevant only as a source of materials and modifiable juvenile Droyne. He will not retreat or surrender and if pushed too far he will order the temporal dislocation device to be overloaded. When it discharges it will likely rip the planet apart – a warning to others who might oppose his master. Like Tellsadiu, the servitor the Travellers faced at Twilight's Peak, Yaskiay is a fanatic. His obedience conditioning cannot be undone.

Yaskiay commands a force of Warriors and supporting castes. Only the Warriors will fight, with certain exceptions. Tsyamoykyo's messing-about with the casteing ritual has produced an unexpected bonus; a Warrior capable of impersonating a Worker. A handful of these have been scattered among his supporting personnel, armed with a concealed fusion weapon. They plod about on menial tasks in the manner of a Worker and are hard to tell apart even for those who know what to look for. When the moment is right, they strike from ambush.

Large numbers of supporting caste members are present in the war machine. They will not fight but may deliberately block the path of intruders or take a plasma bolt meant for a Warrior. They are absolutely loyal and will not allow a Leader who is not a follower of Tsyamoykyo to command them. This will be disturbing for normal Droyne and perhaps a problem in the longer term. If left Leaderless they will gradually die of apathy.

YASKIAY, FAVOURED OF TSYAMOYKYO

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Droyne		Male		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	9	**INT**	14	**SKILLS**
DEX	12	**EDU**	15	Awareness 4, Clairvoyance 5, Tactics (military) 6, Telepathy 6
END	13	**PSI**	15	
WEAPONS		Are for underlings		
ARMOUR		Shimmering Robe with built-in shields		

SUPPORTING CASTES

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Droyne		—		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	9	**INT**	7	**SKILLS**
DEX	9	**EDU**	6	Awareness 2, Caste (caste) 4, Telepathy 2
END	9	**PSI**	8	
ARMOUR		Shimmering Robe		

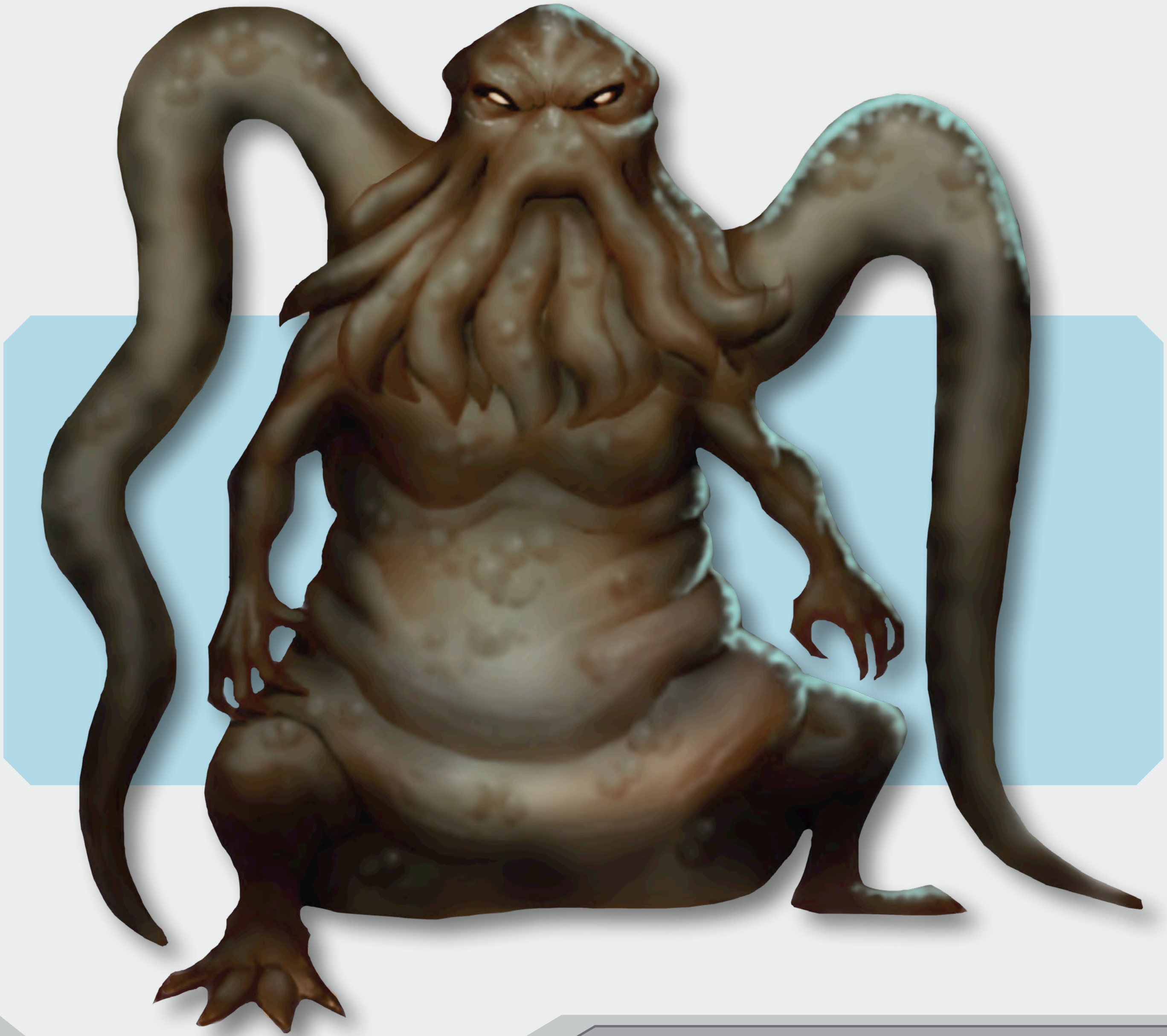
YASKIAY'S WARRIORS

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Droyne		—		—
TRAITS		—		
STR	9	**INT**	11	**SKILLS**
DEX	9	**EDU**	11	Gun Combat (energy) 2
END	9	**PSI**	10	
WEAPONS		Fusion Rifle (4D or 16D)		
ARMOUR		Advanced Fighting-Armour (+20), Psi Shield Helmet		

Yaskiay's Warriors have been modified to make them more dangerous. Like other castes, they are completely loyal and remorseless. Warriors are armed with a fusion weapon which has two settings. On low power it does 4D damage and will not do much harm to the interior of the war machine. On full power, damage is 16D.

Yaskiay has ordered the creation of new monsters inside the war machine, including assault masses of a sort the Travellers have already seen, plus a new type of creature designed mainly as an external-construction unit. It shares some characteristics with boarders but is physically more similar to the assault mass. Its torso has four small Droyne-like limbs but these are not sufficient to walk upright. The constructors can scuttle low to the ground on these limbs but normally use their much more powerful tentacles for mobility. A pair of large tentacles sprouts from close to the 'shoulder' or 'hip'. These can wrap around structural members to enable the creature to climb or jump between sections of the war machine. Smaller tentacles around the head can hold items or provide extra grip. The primary danger posed by these creatures is their ability to knock Travellers off whatever they are secured to, or to grab someone and simply jump off the structure. This is likely to kill both. The constructors are immune to altitude effects in the short term

Animal	**Hits**	**Speed**
Constructor	38	8m
Skills	Melee (natural) 1, Recon 1	
Attacks	Tentacle Bash (2D) or Grab	
Traits	Armour +4	
Behaviour	Special	



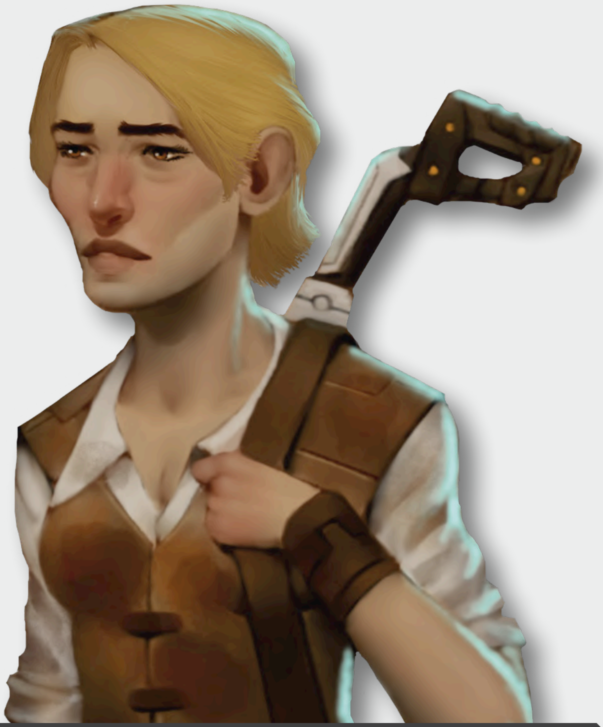
ALLIES

The Travellers do not have all that much to work with; a few human volunteers, Droyne warriors armed mostly with hand weapons and some bison-like creatures that can be ridden or herded. The humans are subject to normal morale effects and will retreat if dismayed. The Droyne will fight to the last unless ordered to retire and the yurfal will behave like large herd beasts on a battlefield… for better or worse.

TRAVELLERS AND OTHER CHARACTERS

Wrath of the Ancients is about what the Travellers do, with everyone else as a supporting cast. The action should therefore focus on them, plus a few other individuals, rather than trying to play out the attack in detail as a wargame. The assault is the backdrop to the Travellers' heroics – or skulduggery, or clinical execution of a flawless plan, or desperate bodging of a solution when all else has failed. Which other characters are present and whether or not they receive much 'camera time' will be determined by dramatic necessity and the Travellers' actions to date.

Much of the time, other characters will be in the background, as it were, assumed to be doing their best to get the job done. They can be used by the Referee to salvage a situation that has gone badly wrong or to put a name and face to someone in peril. The Travellers are far more likely to rush to the rescue of someone they know than a random fighter… or to feel their loss if they have to be sacrificed. There are no traitors among the attackers but there are some whose resolve may fail them. The Referee should keep in mind that Leaders will unhesitatingly do what they think is best for the Oytrip. That could mean ordering a withdrawal or a surrender if the situation looks hopeless. The loss of a Leader will not instantly throw forces under his command into turmoil; they will continue to obey their last orders until a new Leader takes control of them. Droyne will not follow a non-Droyne or obey their commands unless a Leader has told them to do so, so locating Leaders might be an important task for the Travellers.



HUMAN VOLUNTEER

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE	
Human	—	—	
TRAITS	—		
STR 8	**INT** 6	**SKILLS**	
DEX 6	**EDU** 3	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Stealth 1	
END 7	**PSI** 5		
WEAPONS	Carbine (3D-1)		
ARMOUR	Hide Jerkin (+2)		

BRAUDEL DROYNE WARRIOR

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE	
Droyne	—	—	
TRAITS	—		
STR 9	**INT** 4	**SKILLS**	
DEX 7	**EDU** 3	Gun Combat (energy) 1, Melee 0	
END 8	**PSI** 8		
WEAPONS	Plasma Rifle (6D) or Carbine (3D-1) or Lance (3D+2) or Hatchet (2D+1) or Baton (2D)		

THE WAR MACHINE

The war machine is currently positioned in a low-lying area close to where the rock above the city of Ihyuax was blasted away. This is a natural bowl in the mountains, with the land rising in all directions. A winding pass in the mountains to the west gives relatively easy access to the headwaters region. A second, smaller, pass winds south-eastward.

FOREST (1)

The flanks of the western pass are patchily forested, with areas of thick growth where the soil is deep enough. There are some annoyingly marshy sections at the lowest points. Small game is abundant here and unafraid of people since the valley has been virtually ignored – above ground, anyway. It is necessary to pick a careful course through the stands of trees to avoid being in direct sight of the war machine but its ground-level sensor fit has not been implemented yet – threats will come from space, reasoned Tsyamoykyo. Along the edge of the forest facing Ihyuax is a zone of damaged or toppled trees, some of which have had their foliage stripped away.

A few areas are less damaged than others (1a) and might provide cover up to about one kilometre from the war machine. Between these are areas strewn with debris and fallen trunks, with scattered branches and damaged trees. This is very cluttered terrain which might permit an ambush or bring about close combat if the enemy can be drawn in.

FLATTENED FOREST (2)

Another area of forest lies to the south-west of the war machine. This region suffered worse from the blast and a subsequent fire. Most trees are toppled, creating a maze of trunks and branches that both provides cover and impedes movement. A low hill (2a) has become something of a natural fortress, with trunks providing concealment and at least a little cover from enemy fire. A deep fissure (2b) has opened up in the ground. It varies from one to three metres deep and could be used as a firing position or covered route for a flanking force.

THE WAR MACHINE (3)

The unfinished war machine towers above the valley, its structural members and completed sections casting long shadows. Work has concentrated on command facilities and weapons intended to defeat an attack from space, leaving anti-personnel and equipment for last. Some anti-vehicle mounts are fitted, along with tracking equipment that can detect a grav vehicle far off but which is not suited to spotting a ground-level assault force.

SHANTY TOWN (4)

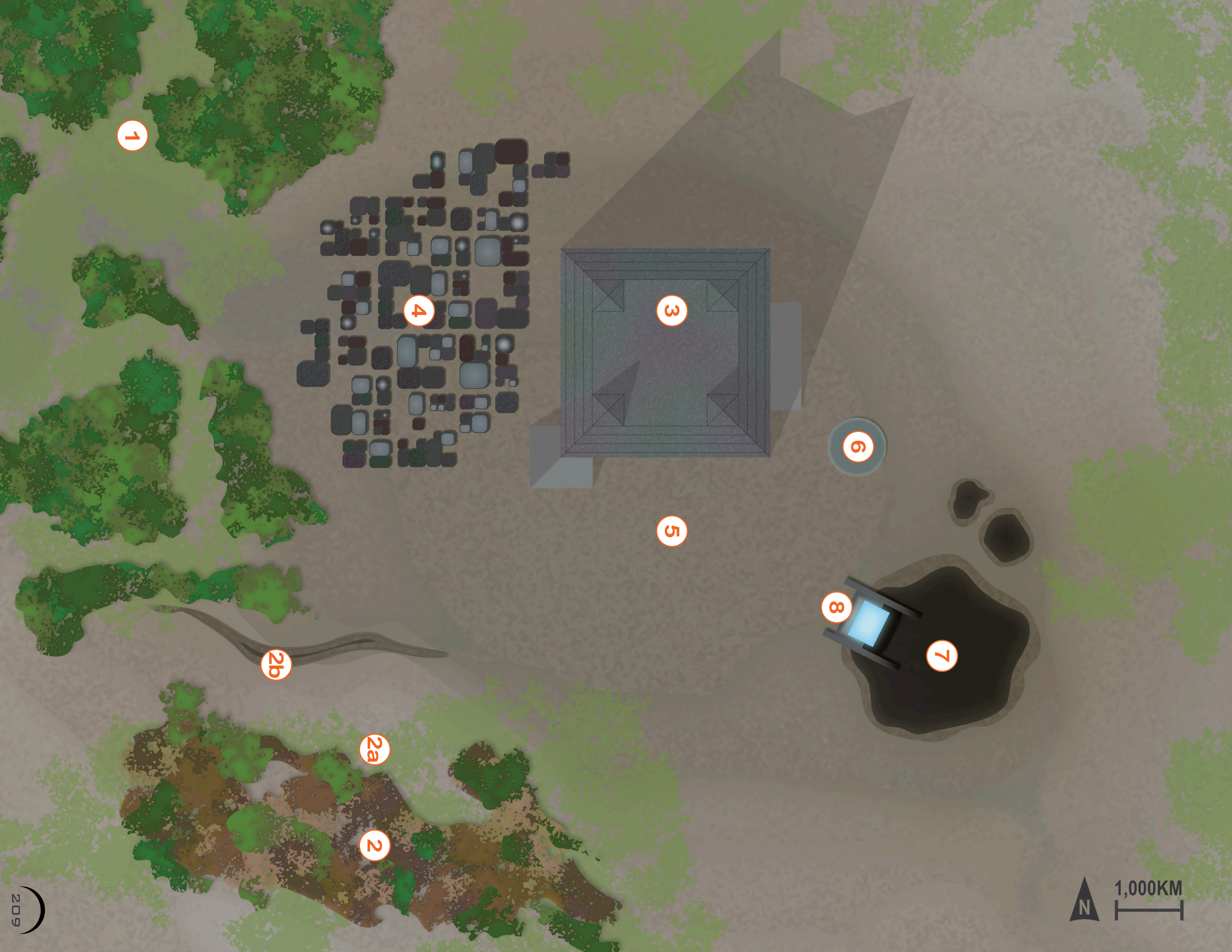
A makeshift settlement has been created, surrounded by wire fences patrolled by armed Droyne guards. The buildings are basic but made from advanced materials. This is in fact a prisoner-of-war camp, where human survivors of the Omicron Division fleet are being held. There are several hundred of them here.

PARADE AREA (5)

This area of flattened earth is where the Warriors of the Oytrip gather to perform their synchronised movements. At intervals, most Warriors make their way here. Sometimes the display begins before all Warriors have arrived; on other occasions those already present stand motionless until all are ready. In between displays the Warriors will be more dispersed but some will be here or engaged in manoeuvres and target practice on the less flat ground to the east.

THE PODIUM (6)

Naturally, a command podium has been erected from which Ordssess or another conditioned Leader can oversee construction work and coordinate movement displays of the Warriors. This podium is built to the same specifications as the one the Travellers encountered at Twilight's Peak; shielded against psionics and disintegrators, with a Protection +40 shield against kinetic and energy attacks. This does not protect against gas or secondary energy effects such as a primitive firebomb, which the Travellers may remember from their previous encounter.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Blasting through the shield is always an option if the Travellers can muster enough firepower. Alternatively, they could try to destroy the shield generator nodes within the podium itself. Its structure grants Protection +30 and is solid enough that it cannot be destroyed with small arms fire. However, that is not necessary; if a control system or a generator node is hit it will be put out of action, weakening or dropping the shield. Any attack that does enough damage to penetrate the podium's armour has the potential to do this.

If Travellers are shooting blindly into the podium, any penetrating hit has a 1 in 36 (12+ on 2D) chance of hitting a vital component. If any damage penetrates the podium and hits one of these targets, roll 1D. On 1–5 a node is hit and the strength of the shield against kinetic and energy weapons is reduced by 2D. On a 6 the control system is put out of action and the shield goes down. If the Travellers can detect the nodes or have a good idea where they are from their previous encounter this chance increases to 8+ on 2D.

Ordssess cannot be harmed or captured whilst the podium is functional and his Warriors will protect him to their dying breath. An attack on the podium is unlikely to succeed but could be a useful distraction. Ordssess is more likely to think the Travellers are coming for him than believe the war machine is their goal.

THE CITY-CAVERN (7)

The city of Ihyuax lay in an artificial cavern under the valley, with spires stretching almost to the cavern roof. Some of these were toppled when the rock above was stripped away and fearsome weapons detonated within the city. However, it was built much tougher than the average Droyne city and withstood most of the blasts. It could not stand against the ground assault however, and is now the planetary stronghold of the occupiers. All Droyne survivors who could be found were brought here and put to work. Little has been done to clear rubble or aid the wounded, other than where it facilitated the project at hand.

Currently, the city is an eerily silent workshop. Structures are cannibalised for materials to build the war machine whilst juvenile Droyne are being turned into more of Tsyamoykyo's monsters. The Droyne of Braudel survive as best they can among the wreckage of their city, many dying of neglect every day as they push feverishly to complete their tasks.

THE GRAV PLATFORM (8)

A makeshift grav lift provides access from the cavern floor to a platform built on the edge of the destruction zone. It can take dozens of Droyne at once or a large piece of equipment. Grav vehicles are also used for access but there are not many available. Disabling the platform would slow work down considerably until it is repaired but will not impair combat capacity in the valley much as most of the Warriors are already on the surface.

The war machine is a long way from being finished, although critical systems are in place. Priority was given to power and command systems, along with weapons and sensors suited to engaging spacecraft. The occupiers never envisaged an attack at ground level on a thoroughly conquered planet. The only possible foes were Droyne remnants; primitives messing about in boats were of no consequence. Such threats as might emerge could be handled by Warriors. In any case, small anti-personnel systems tend to be fitted on outer casings and most of these have yet to be put in place.

Major structural members are in place, suspending big systems between them. There is also an incomplete lattice of supports and trunking that could be used to move between the major components. The four main decks are covered but incomplete, with large open areas between important sections. The overall pattern is of major structural members and grav accessways running up the corners of the machine into access chambers at each major level. It is not possible to go straight up the machine from the ground, as there are security and working chambers at each level. Travellers will need to move through the corners of each deck to get to the next grav lift.

OUTER SHELL (1)

The outer shell is only partly constructed. When complete it will provide heavy protection to everything within and shield against teleporters and disintegrators. Thrust plates similar to those used in a starship will be added to the outer shell when it is built, allowing the machine to move at speed and remain stable in high winds. At present it can only move very slowly and carefully.

PYRAMIDS (2)

At each corner of the upper level, structural members continue through the top decks to create spires. These contain airlocked access points to the upper surface and house weapons with which to engage incoming spacecraft, including disintegrators and an antimatter missile launcher.

FIGHTING DECKS (3)

The lowest decks contain barracks and training areas for Warriors assigned to defend the war machine. The outer casing is in place but only a few living areas are complete, meaning that most of the Warrior complement has to be accommodated in the city. There are also extensive grav lifter banks on the lowest decks, mostly embedded in the structure of the war machine's base. Storage chambers, although incomplete, have been filled with human items. These were taken from captured Omicron Division survivors and include their weaponry.

FIRST ACCESS SHAFTS (4)

Access shafts run from the lowest decks to the next level above. They are big enough to carry a large piece of equipment or vehicle, or a couple of dozen Droyne. The lift mechanism uses gravity manipulation, with the platform serving mainly as a traffic control measure. At need, the platform can be locked at the bottom of the shaft and personnel can float up the tubes using handholds on the sides. This can result in collisions or accidents but in an emergency the occupiers will not care about such matters.

POWER GENERATION CHAMBERS (5)

At present accessible by scrambling along structural members or a grav shaft from above, the power generation chambers use gravitational hysteresis to provide a constant flow of power. This is stored in antimatter batteries. The machine cannot generate enough power to run all its systems at once but once charged could fight at full intensity for months before its batteries became depleted. The life span of such a machine is measured in centuries or even millennia; once power generation equipment finally breaks down the batteries will deplete eventually. If a state is reached where the batteries are no longer capable of containing antimatter, a catastrophic release of the remaining energy will occur.

WORKING DECKS (6)

The second level of decks is devoted to the relatively mundane work of keeping the war machine operational. The outer casing around these decks is complete. When the war machine is resting on the ground at sea level this part of the device is about 1.5 kilometres high, which in Braudel's thin atmosphere provides an acceptable but uncomfortable partial pressure of oxygen. Opening or holing the casing will cause decompression but this will not be sufficient to fling people out. Anyone rapidly ascending to this altitude or higher from ground level will suffer altitude sickness and quickly become confused and sluggish unless they have a source of oxygen.

SECOND ACCESS SHAFTS (7)

The second set of access shafts runs from a security complex up to the thinking decks.

MESON GENERATOR (8)

Located between the working and thinking decks is a planetary-defence meson generator. It is operational but not yet tied into the control systems for the war machine. Local control systems are online. The meson generator has its own set of antimatter power storage units which serve as a backup for the war machine's other system.

THINKING DECK (9)

The thinking deck rests at a level of 2.8 kilometres above sea level, at an altitude where Droyne will quickly succumb to altitude sickness and humans will not be able to function for long. Pressure difference is sufficient to possibly throw people out if a compartment is holed. This deck is devoted to technical functions for the most part, with workshops and repair facilities throughout. One section is being set up as a ritual chamber, with associated confinement areas. It will be used to create more of Tsyamoykyo's monsters once operational.

THIRD ACCESS SHAFTS (10)

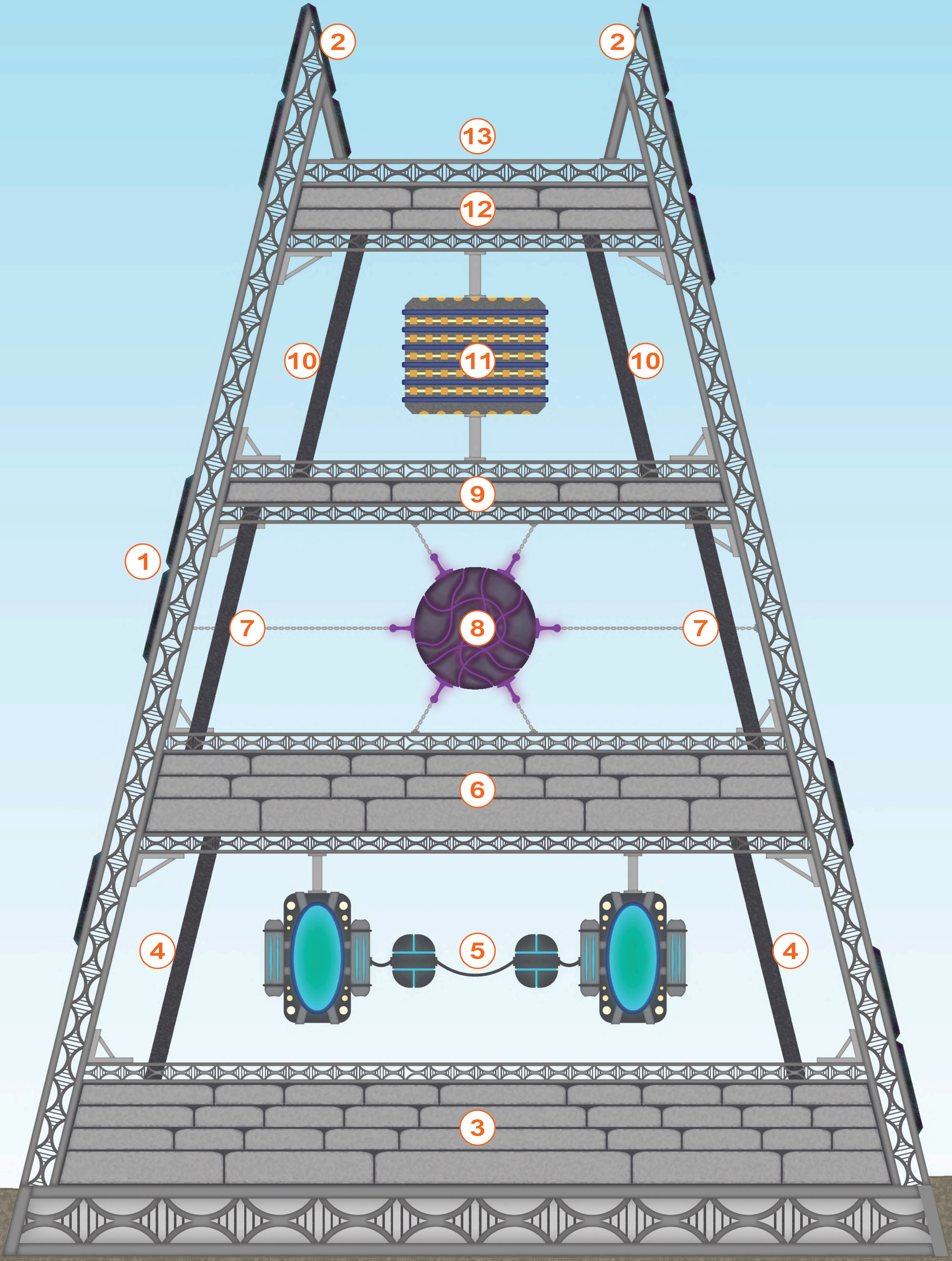
The third set of access shafts is little different from the others.

TEMPORAL DISLOCATION DEVICE (11)

Such was Tsyamoykyo's ego that his new conquest had to be protected by a ridiculously overpowered weapon. The temporal dislocation device mounted in the war machine is semi-operational, in that it can be jury-rigged to make a shot or two but has not yet received its full complement of antimatter power storage and command systems.

COMMANDING DECKS (12)

The commanding decks are at the very top of the war machine, under an especially thick layer of external armour. They are almost four kilometres above the surface, at an altitude where the air is too thin for humans to breathe for long unaided. The decks are fully enclosed and have some of their external armour in position.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UPPER SURFACE (13)

The majority of the upper surface is devoted to a huge ship teleporter, capable of handling a vessel up to 100,000 tons displacement. It is set up to teleport objects delineated by metallic substances, enabling it to teleport large numbers of people if they are all inside a starship, vehicle, or even just a big metal box.

INSIDE THE WAR MACHINE

The war machine is constructed of advanced materials similar to those used in the construction of Ancients facilities. These can be made on Braudel but only slowly, cannibalising materials from Droyne cities and feeding them through machines in the remains of Ihyuax. Priority has been given to structural components, with the result that only the main decks have received their outer shell. Eventually, there will be dozens of minor decks and areas within the machine dedicated to all its many functions. Very little of the outer armour, which will protect against starship-grade weaponry, has been fitted. Bulkheads of the same armour are also intended but at present all that exists are mounting brackets and support structures.

Internal walls and the outer coating of the decks grants Protection +30. Exceeding this will make a small hole which will be quickly sealed by the material's self-repair mechanism. A fist-sized hole requires 60 points of damage in a single attack, whilst blasting a jagged rent big enough for a person to duck through requires 300 points. There are alternative methods of making a hole, such as creating a pattern of small punctures and applying an explosive charge. However, for the most part it will be necessary to use existing doors or gaps.

The machine as a whole is unfinished but some areas have been properly fitted out. The remainder are in varying stages of completion, from little more than a framework of beams to a finished chamber simply awaiting furnishings and control systems. In areas that are more or less finished there are dispensers or holders for tools and equipment, with temporary stands close to working areas or where personnel exit the pressurised interior to work outside. It should be possible to grab common tools – common by the standards of people working in an Ancients facility – from these places. If the Travellers can make a case for an item logically being nearby they should be allowed to find one.

All decks have internal transit systems, using an ovoid pod capable of holding about 10 people in a crush – they are designed for six Droyne plus whatever equipment they are carrying. The pods run in transit tubes at incredible speed, reaching upwards of 600 kilometres per hour on a run from one end of the war machine to the other. This translates as the ability to move between any two areas on the same level in about two minutes. Moving from one set of decks to another takes 1D minutes.

THE ALTITUDE PROBLEM

Altitude may be a problem for both the Travellers and their opponents. For reference, the highest large city on Earth, which has a standard atmosphere, is at almost four kilometres above sea level. People live there normally but are acclimatised to the altitude. A person ascending quickly from sea level to even half that altitude risks serious consequences including disorientation and inability to concentrate. Notably, someone suffering from altitude sickness is very slow to react to changing circumstances – people have walked right off cliffs because they were unable to process the hazard in time.

Braudel has a thin atmosphere, so these effects begin at a much lower altitude, and Droyne have a smaller lung capacity than humans, so altitude effects begin earlier and are worse for them. Those working outside pressurised areas are issued with clear 'bubble' helmets connected to a compressor device which supplies normal-pressure air. These are being manufactured in huge numbers but are still not universal, so most personnel operating within sealed sections do not have them. The Travellers may be able to grab these masks from a storage area or off enemies if they have not solved the altitude problem some other way. It is possible they have brought goop-suit dispensers from Twilight's Peak; while unglamorous, they will suffice.

STORMING THE WAR MACHINE

The assault on the war machine is no mere skirmish. It is a vast collection of incidents and problems to be solved against the backdrop of a vicious battle. Exactly what happens is up to the Travellers – it is their plan; they control the attacking forces and they alone will determine what happens and where. Some groups of Travellers might try a stealthy approach; others may prefer a direct attack. The Referee must adjudicate the situation the Travellers create rather than attempting to impose a script upon them. The assault could be over in a single session but there is the potential for it to run longer – it is a big story in its own right and the Referee should ensure it has time to play out.

The details may be complex but the overall situation boils down to this: the Travellers must get to the top of the war machine and seize the command complex, and everyone else must stop the occupation forces from preventing them from doing so. That might be accomplished in layers or stages, with some enemy troops distracted into chasing a different target, some held at bay by ground forces in a pitched battle short of the machine's entry points, and some slowed down in a running fight through the machine. Only one of the Travellers needs to reach the control chamber; the others can run interference or pursue different goals.

The assault takes the form of several phases, each of whatever length suits dramatic need. One phase might be a crisis point that requires only a few seconds to resolve, whilst another could be half an hour of sniping and skirmishing. The Referee can assume that Travellers who are doing different things in different locations will resynch at some point. One way to handle the action is to break it into segments. For example, if one of the Travellers engages in an heroic defence of the working decks, holding back the tide of reinforcements, their actions in each phase can be resolved separately from another Traveller who is leading the assault up the grav tubes. The Referee can play a fast and loose with timing, allowing Travellers to rush to another's assistance.

The Travellers' experience of the battle might be similar to a rather violent adventure, in which they proceed through the interior of the war machine and deal with problems they encounter. The purpose of the force outside is to keep enemy reinforcements away from the war machine and allow the Travellers to complete their mission. If the Referee prefers, the situation outside can be ignored, working on the assumption that the Travellers' allies hang on just enough for them to reach the command decks. For a more complete experience the focus can switch back and forth, with setbacks outside potentially affecting the Travellers' progress. Ryau's telepathic assistance, and that of her Drones, will allow the Travellers to observe and direct the actions of their allies.

The assault can be resolved at different levels depending on circumstances. If the Travellers are involved in something significant, the action will focus on skill checks and dramatic resolution of their actions. This does not necessarily mean combat; the journey through the war machine may result in non-violent interactions, attempts at diplomacy, or taking control of key systems. The Referee should not forget to make descriptions of the interior as vivid as possible – the Travellers may be in a hurry but they are having a lifetime experience. Besides, the beauty of Droyne artworks or the strangeness of a party of Workers standing motionless in the path of a firefight can counterpoint the otherwise near-constant frenetic violence.

The focus must move in order to advance the timeline of the assault. The Travellers will need to see attacks develop, spot movement of reinforcements and receive communications about what is going on elsewhere. This is not just a series of fight scenes; the Travellers will have to come up with new plans on the fly, respond to opportunities or crises, and at times figure out how best to proceed. There can be dramatic 'talking' scenes with no skill checks in between fights, and some major situations may be better suited to narrative resolution than a detailed task chain that will bog down the game.

OPENING MOVES

The Travellers first need to get their forces into position. There are occasional overflights by grav vehicles carrying out some errand or another but no-one is really paying that much attention. The chances of a ground attack are, at least as far as the defenders believe, about zero. Sensors will pick up any significant threat – which the defenders would define as vehicles, starships, or infantry armed with powerful weapons – and what defensive thinking has been undertaken is concerned with threats from orbit.

There are no patrols in the wooded areas or approaches to the area around the war machine. A large force of people stomping up the middle of the valley will be spotted and it is to be hoped the Travellers are smarter than this. Infiltration through the forest is a good option and it might also be possible to disguise the approach by herding yurfal ahead of the attackers. Large herds are uncommon but the initial response to one approaching would be 'just beasts' with a decision to chase them off if they get too close.

If the Travellers are smart and make good use of terrain they can get within one kilometre of the war machine undetected. One option – not necessarily a good one – is to assemble the entire force in the forest and rush the nearest entry point at the south-west corner. This provides a bunched target, however, and the assault force will surely suffer heavy casualties before reaching the war machine. The enemy response will be concentrated in this case and defeat is likely.

A better option might be to infiltrate some forces onto the flank to delay and split the enemy response. The following plan is not the only option but may serve as an example of what can be done. Travellers with the Tactics skill will realise that outright defeating the enemy is not going to be possible. Confusion and delay are the only viable options.

One option is to split the attacking force into three major elements and some minor ones. One element, perhaps with the majority of the ranged weapons, infiltrates the damaged area of forest (2) and positions some shooters on the hill or in the fissure, with additional fighters to cover the flank of the shooters. This force is tasked with sniping Leaders and those Warriors who are in a position to intercept other forces. As well as providing fire support this force may draw off part of the enemy's response, perhaps embroiling more than its number in close combat or a deadly game of cat-and-mouse among the wreckage of the forest.

A second element infiltrates the less damaged forest (1) and attempts to storm the lower decks of the war machine. If they can be secured, this force will try to hold them as long as possible and even if pushed back can harass reinforcements as they move through the machine. The third major element is a reserve, held back to deal with a counterattack or exploit some unexpected advantage. It is likely this force will end up drawn into the fighting at (2).

Detection Chance

Factor	Check to Detect
Using a vehicle, grav belt, or other easily detectable device	Automatic
Large force, 200+ in size, moving openly	4+
Large force, 200+ in size, using cover	6+
Modest force, 100–200 in size, moving openly	5+
Modest force, 100–200 in size, using cover	7+
Small force, 10–100 in size, moving openly	6+
Small force, 10–100 in size, using cover	8+
Party of 10 or less, moving openly	7+
Party of 10 or less, using cover	9+

In addition, smaller groups perform distraction tasks or attempt to gain advantages. Infiltrators might be sent to investigate the shanty town (4) and could then decide to free the Omicron Division personnel. If so, they can be persuaded to join the fight if the Travellers' representative makes a good case and weapons are available. Other options include stampeding yurfal at the enemy's Warriors or sneaking into the city and causing mayhem there.

The nearest entry point to the war machine is one kilometre from the forest edge. Getting in another way will take much longer; the machine is the size of a small town, so running around the outside is not a good option. If the Travellers have other ways in, such as teleportation or some means of flight, they can cross the gap more quickly. The Travellers will not be spotted immediately unless they are part of a huge force or making themselves very obvious. Every minute they are advancing towards the war machine there is a chance the Travellers will be detected, represented by a straight 2D check on the Detection Chance table.

If the Travellers' force opens fire or otherwise draws attention to itself, DM+2 applies on every check thereafter. Once the base of the war machine is reached, DM+4 applies.

How long the Travellers take to reach the war machine can be important. There are three general modes of movement: stealthy, brisk and rush. Each allows ground to be covered at a differing rate. Travellers who simply run towards the war machine will take three to five minutes to get there, assuming they are in good physical condition. Dashing from cover-to-cover will extend this time, as will lumbering along under a gigantic pile of weaponry. The Distance Covered table indicates how much distance the Travellers cross in that minute. Once one kilometre has been crossed, the Travellers are at the base of the war machine. Cover can be used whilst moving stealthily or briskly. The latter assumes rushes from one place of concealment to another.

The third column on the table indicates fatigue accumulated by the Travellers. This is applied as a negative DM to their actions as they attempt to enter the war machine. A DM no greater than -3 is applied to checks to do anything physical until all the fatigue is spent. For example, a Traveller who has 11 accumulated fatigue applies DM-3 to their first three physical actions then DM -2 to the next. Travellers who try to 'game' this by carrying out pointless actions can be given an extra 1D points of fatigue each time.

Going slowly allows more time for detection but the chance is lower each time. Rushing reduces time but causes fatigue and increases the chance of detection. The Travellers can increase their chances of arriving undetected by various ruses and stratagems. One option is to cause a distraction elsewhere; this alerts the defenders that something is happening but causes them to look in the wrong place. An ideal distraction does not look like an attack; a cattle stampede, collapsing structure or crashing grav vehicle will all draw attention without creating an alert. Obvious hostile action such as gunfire from elsewhere will divert attention for a while but the defenders will look for additional attackers. The Referee should apply DM-1 to -4 to the detection chance depending on the quality of the deception.

GETTING IN

The entry point is guarded. There are six Warriors standing around it, motionless unless they have some reason to move. They will certainly detect the Travellers and their party within 100 metres. Up to that point scrubby vegetation and folds in the ground might hide even the most blatant advance. The Travellers will need to eliminate these guards. If not they will open fire and alert the rest of the defenders. If the odds against them are bad they will retreat and either defend the entryway or close it up. This could derail the Travellers' plan entirely.

How the Travellers deal with this obstacle is up to them. It might be possible to walk right up to the Warriors and start talking to them. They will not let anyone in but they are simple Warriors. It might be possible to persuade them to send for a Leader and attack at close range whilst they wait. Note that a Leader will not let the Travellers into the war machine either but will request instructions from further up the chain of command which will result in orders to disarm the new arrivals and hold them for interrogation. This is the Droyne equivalent of 'get an officer' and can be used to buy time for whatever the Travellers decide to do next.

The Travellers may be able to snipe, stun, or otherwise disable the guards without raising an alarm. This would facilitate a rush into the access complex of the fighting decks and a surprise attack on anyone inside. One possible gambit is for the Travellers to be ahead of an obvious attacking force. The Warriors will fire on the major force and may not notice Travellers positioned closer to them. This will make them easier targets.

Distance Covered

Movement Rate	Distance per Minute	Fatigue
Stealthy, using concealment	50m plus/minus 10% x Effect of Average (8+) Survival or Stealth check	+0
Stealthy but without much use of concealment	75m plus/minus 10% x Effect of Average (8+) Survival or Stealth check	+0
Brisk, using concealment	100m plus/minus 10% x Effect of Average (8+) Survival or Stealth check	+D3
Brisk, without much use of concealment	150m plus/minus 10% x Effect of Routine (6+) Athletics (endurance) check	+D3
Fast	200m plus/minus 10% x Effect of Routine (6+) Athletics (endurance) check	+1D

However, the Travellers do have other options at their disposal. They might implant a psionic nightmare in one of the Warriors and cause him to turn on the others, or hurl them into the sky using telekinesis. So long as they are out of the way, the Travellers can get inside and secure the access area.

DETECTION AND RESPONSE

Once the attack is detected, the defenders will respond. This will be more or less instant for anyone close by but a coherent response by the defence force as a whole will take longer to materialise. From the moment of detection the Travellers have 1D+6 minutes before organised response begins. This time is doubled if the Travellers chose their moment well. If they chose to wait until the city's Warriors were gathered before Ordssess to engage in ritual movements, he and they will be distracted. They might take a few moments to finish what they are doing and start moving, and for Ordssess to receive advice from his Drones and his military Leaders then to issue orders.

In this circumstance the defenders' main force is gathered near the command podium and will take some time to reach the war machine. The majority of the Warriors will have to jog the six kilometres or so to the base of the war machine. This will take some 25–30 minutes and if not disrupted is a strangely beautiful but frightening sight. Thousands of Warriors running in perfect unison, in complete silence, will reach the west side of the war machine and begin entering.

Others will arrive sooner. There are vehicles in the air and others available to pick up small parties of Droyne and some groups are closer to the war machine. The advance of the great phalanx of Warriors is something of a clock for the Travellers. If they can complete their mission before too many arrive they will win; if not they will surely be overwhelmed.

If the Travellers did not time their attack well, a greater number of Warriors are closer to the war machine and will be available to respond. This will make their task more difficult, although the majority of Warriors are still half an hour away. At this point the die is cast; the Travellers must ascend the war machine and seize control of vital areas before they are swept under a tide of plasma bolts.

TIME

Once the attack begins the Travellers have limited time to reach the command decks. The main force of Warriors is 30 minutes away if the Travellers make their assault during one of the rituals. If not, the Warriors arrive in waves every 2D minutes. They will begin to enter the war machine by way of the ramp at its eastern side as soon as they arrive. Each wave contains 2Dx100 Warriors, sufficient to sweep aside any resistance the Travellers might be able to mount. At 30 minutes after the assault begins the main force will arrive – thousands more Warriors. These timings can be altered by the Travellers' allies, imposing delay on the advancing Warriors or distracting them.

The advance of the main Droyne force is a 'clock' for the Travellers to race against but the arrival of large numbers of Warriors is not an instant loss for the Travellers – the Droyne can move through the war machine no faster than the Travellers can. If they can stay ahead, they can still complete the mission. However, it may be necessary to find ways to delay pursuers inside the war machine. Clever Travellers may come up with inventive options, or they may rely on their allies to fight a desperate rearguard action.

THE BATTLE OUTSIDE

Once the Travellers have entered the war machine, their focus is likely to be on pushing through to reach the command decks. The fighting outside will influence the amount of opposition they face. Some groups will want to control this directly; others will not. The Referee should adjudicate the actions of both sides on the assumption that neither is stupid but nor have they fought or trained for a ground war. The Leaders of the Oytrip of Vaykouh considered the defence of their cities as a possible future scenario but think in terms of attack from space, with street fighting as a bitter endgame after the war has already been lost.

As a result of this mindset, neither side is well coordinated unless the Travellers take a hand. Local commanders will do the obvious and try to work towards an overall goal but they are not imaginative or even well versed in standard tactics. The Travellers' allies want to keep reinforcements away from the war machine and they are well aware they are outgunned. Their tactics are basic but sensible – draw enemy attention and impose delay, ideally dragging their opponents into a close-quarters battle where hand weapons are useful and guns can be taken from fallen foes. Droyne have an aversion to close combat but the attackers are desperate. This translates to a willingness to get stuck in where their opponents are more concerned with staying out of hand-to-hand combat.

For their part the defenders lack coherent leadership. In command inside the war machine is a loyal servitor of Tsyamoykyo, who has overall authority over everything on the planet. He will concern himself with the internal defence of the machine and demand that Ordssess send him assistance. He does not provide guidance on how to defeat the Travellers' allies; just repeated commands to 'crush them'. This means that the defenders' strategy revolves around getting Warriors to the war machine and destroying the force outside. There are few details beyond that.

Within minutes of the alarm being raised, Ordssess orders his Warriors – every single one of them – to go to the defence of the war machine. Most are far out of position and have no transport. He orders vehicles to start picking up Warriors and landing them on the war machine's upper decks. There are few armed vehicles, so most of the vehicular movement will be transport oriented. Those vehicles with weapons will be directed to attack the Travellers and their allies, although no coherent strategy is developed. Attacks will be piecemeal and intermittent but potentially deadly. Reconnaissance is completely ignored, leaving potential gaps in Ordssess' response.

The Referee should note the identity and location of each significant allied force. A Drefusk, nominally containing 216 Droyne, would definitely be considered significant and some smaller formations may be added to the list if they have a reasonable amount of fighting power. For example, a small assault party whose members have been issued the best weapons available might be considered a significant force as it can influence the course of the battle. The defenders have effectively infinite resources as far as this battle is concerned so book-keeping is not necessary.

Each significant force has a running DM which reflects its capability to influence events around it. This is mainly due to its fighting power but could involve other factors such as leadership, stealth or unusual talents. Rather than tracking casualties, the Referee can use this DM to indicate the current capabilities of the formation – what matters is its ability to carry out its mission, not its exact number of effectives.

By default the Travellers start out with a total DM of +6 to distribute among significant formations. No unit can have a negative DM at the start of the battle but +0 is acceptable. If the Travellers have come up with some good ideas during the preparation phase they may be awarded additional DM points to distribute as they see fit. This DM is used to resolve all actions made by the group. It will be reduced over time, reflecting casualties or personnel separated from their comrades. Whenever a force undertakes an action, the result is determined by rolling 2D on the Force Action Outcomes table, plus or minus any DM the force might have.

It is possible that a force might somehow cling to a position or even drive off a much larger enemy unit with repeated counterattacks whilst its DM gets more and more negative. There is a tale to be told here, of an unlikely partnership between a Worker

Force Action Outcomes

2D+ DMs	Outcome
12+	The action is a success and the unit grows in capability, perhaps by grabbing weapons from defeated enemies. DM increased by +1.
10–11	The action is a success, with no change to capability.
8–9	The action is a marginal success, with losses or disruption to the unit. DM reduced by -1.
6–7	The Travellers may choose: either the action is a failure and the DM is reduced by -1 or it is an expensive success in which case the DM is reduced by -2.
4–5	The action is a failure. DM reduced by -1.
2–3	The action is a costly failure. DM reduced by -2.
0–1	The action is a disaster. DM reduced by -4.
-1 or less	The force is rendered insignificant. It may be scattered or completely wiped out, forced to surrender or otherwise be incapable of further influencing events.

handing ammunition to a plucky yurfal-herder as they somehow hold off an army long after all their comrades are dead. The results of actions by the Travellers' forces can add to the narrative of the battle as well as directly influencing its outcomes.

The main enemy force will advance towards the war machine rather than engaging the Travellers allies but there are still plenty of opponents on the field. These operate as loosely coordinated small units, none larger than a Drefusk. Of course, that is still about 216 Warriors with advanced weapons, or a smaller number of Warriors supported by other castes. In a straight fight the Travellers' allies would be quickly eliminated but if they can stack the deck a little they will be able to at least keep the enemy busy.

When a clash occurs between two forces, circumstances will dictate some additional DMs. The Referee must decide which apply on a case-by-case basis.

These situations can be interpreted various ways. For example, an allied force that is defending an entry to the war machine might not be considered to be so badly outnumbered since the enemy must come at them through a choke point. In all likelihood, the Travellers' allies will be ground down quickly and annihilated if they try to engage in a stand-up fight in the open. Their best hope is to be a nuisance, causing a lot of disturbance but not many casualties, and buy time for the Travellers.

The Travellers might find ways to augment their forces or increase fighting power. One option is to free the Omicron Division personnel and arm at least some of them. Their weaponry is inside the war machine, creating a problem for the Travellers to solve. One option is to seize one or more grav vehicles and make a daring dash across the battlefield to distribute weapons to the Omicron personnel or a beleaguered group of allies. Weapons captured inside the war machine could also be distributed this way. If one of the Travellers makes it their mission to do this, the incident can be played out as normal. If an allied group is detailed for the task instead, the effort is resolved using the system described before. Success means the weapons got through, increasing the DM for that allied group by +1. It is possible that some minor hero might make several runs in an increasingly battered air/raft, single-handedly keeping allies in the fight.

Circumstance	DM
Allied force is hugely outnumbered (10 to 1 or worse)	DM-8
Allied force is heavily outnumbered (6 to 1 or worse)	DM-6
Allied force is seriously outnumbered (3 to 1 or worse)	DM-4
Allied force is outnumbered	DM-2
Allied force has an advantage in numbers	DM+2
Allied force has a significant advantage in numbers (3 to 1 or better)	DM+4
Allied force is outgunned (this is virtually certain!) in a firefight	DM-4
Allied force is outgunned but has managed to get into close combat	DM-2
Allied force has a defensive position	DM+1
Allied force has an excellent defensive position	DM+3

WAR MACHINE FIGHTING DECKS

The lowest of the fighting decks are filled with grav lifter machinery which has a few access tunnels running through it. These could be used to move around under the inhabited decks, emerging from an unexpected direction. The levels above the grav lifters are not entirely sealed, as full environmental control is not really necessary. Puncturing a sealed section will have no appreciable pressure effects.

There are Technicians and Workers all over the fighting decks but they will not take part in any combat. There are also some Warriors. These may have to be swept aside, or perhaps they can be evaded. The Travellers cannot afford to take too long about transiting these decks and might become bored with endless firefights. The Referee should use Warrior parties sparingly and, ideally, inventively. One might be encountered getting out of a transit tube and be sitting ducks; another comes rushing out of a side corridor, bringing about a point-blank scramble. No two fights should be the same, and there should not be too many of them.

CONSTRUCTION FLOOR (1)

The eastern side of the war machine is open and used as a construction and materials marshalling area. There is some heavy machinery scattered about along with stockpiles of construction materials, creating plenty of hard cover. A ramp leads down to the ground outside and will be the primary means of access for Warriors coming to defend the machine.

When the Travellers enter this area there are a few parties of Warriors on guard. If they can be eliminated the Travellers could station forces to hold the top of the ramp to keep reinforcements out. The Travellers will need to clear this area of opposition for that to work, which they may not have time for. If they brought a force of allies with them into the war machine, this is the best place to use it. Getting bogged down themselves might lead to failure in the overall mission.

ACCESS COMPLEX (2)

The four access complexes control movement to and from the ground when the war machine is operational. Large armoured exteriors doors and a retractable ramp allow parties of Warriors to descend to the surface when necessary. The rest of the complex contains external sensor monitoring chambers, an armoury and a marshalling area for movement either outside or up into the interior of the war machine. These chambers are not fitted out as yet but will contain a small contingent of Warriors as guards. There are no weapons in the armoury but some could be taken from eliminated enemy Warriors.

GRAV SHAFT (3)

The four grav shafts allow access to the interior of the war machine under normal circumstances. All are functional but the north-east one (3a) is currently blocked. A large load of construction materials appears to have been badly stacked and has jammed in the shaft. Technicians and Workers are assigned to clear the blockage with plasma cutters but are making only slow progress.

FIGHTING COMMAND COMPLEX (4)

This area serves as a command centre for Warriors aboard the war machine and is always staffed by a Leader-of-Warriors and a few guards. The command chamber, complete with a suitable podium for the Leader, is surrounded by unfinished chambers which for the most part have no furnishings. Some have been used to store weapons and equipment taken from the Omicron Division captives, sorted but not by equipment type. Instead, all items are grouped by the owner's rank and role.

During the attack, command of the whole above ground Warrior force will fall upon the Leader stationed here. Eliminating him will disrupt the ability of the Droyne to respond to changing circumstances. It is not possible to jam communications to more junior Leaders as they are telepathic but if this chamber is lost the Droyne will make it a priority to recapture it and install a new commander. In the meantime command can be exercised from anywhere but doing so is displeasing to the Droyne. The Travellers may be able to draw in a new Droyne commander and stage an ambush, or divert significant enemy forces to the battle for the area.

ACCOMMODATION BLOCK (5)

One corner of the fighting decks has been fully fitted out. Warrior accommodation takes the form of small chambers housing six Droyne in sleeping pods, with a minimal storage area for clothing and weaponry. At present none has been assigned but the block is clean and functional. The sleeping pods have a medical function and could be used to stabilise or even treat casualties.

TRAINING AND MARSHALLING AREA (6)

This section of the fighting decks is given over to training areas, which use advanced holograms to create an extremely realistic environment. In between them are control chambers where the simulations are run. The holograms are programmable and might be used to distract enemies or disguise attackers.

UNFINISHED AREAS (7)

Most of the ‘completed’ sections of the war machine contain areas still under construction or littered with materials awaiting use. The majority of the fighting decks are in this state, with internal walls yet to be installed in some cases.

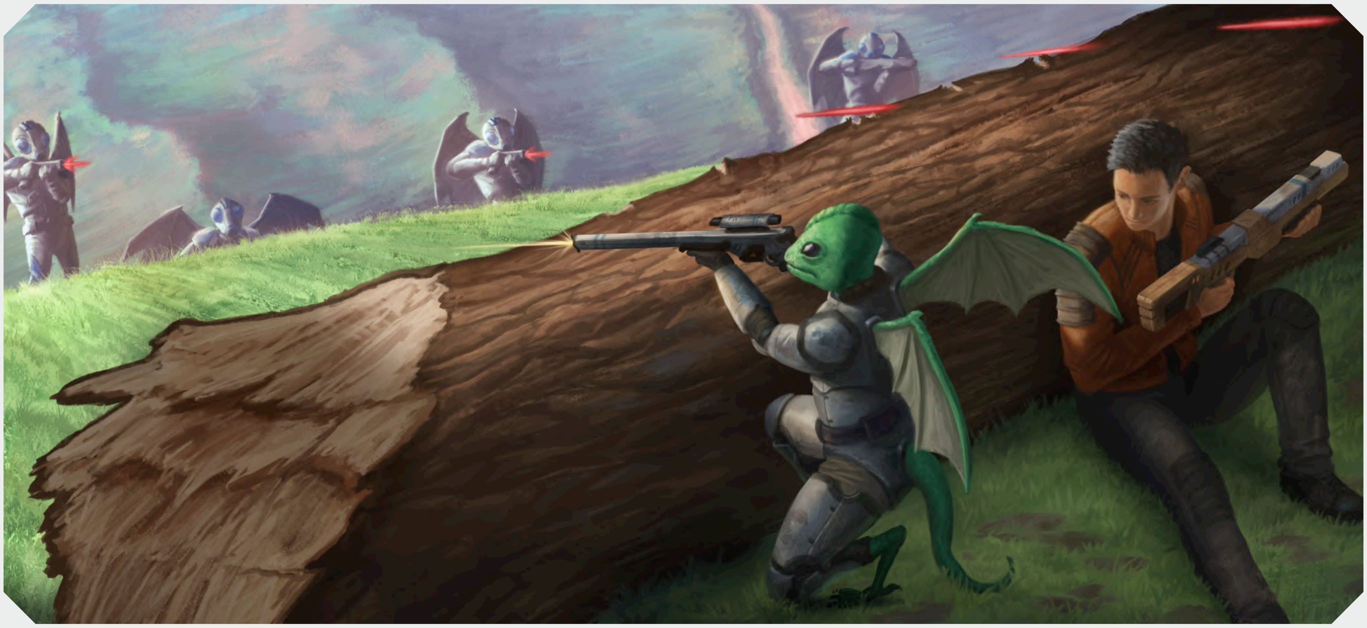
ACCESS SCAFFOLD (8)

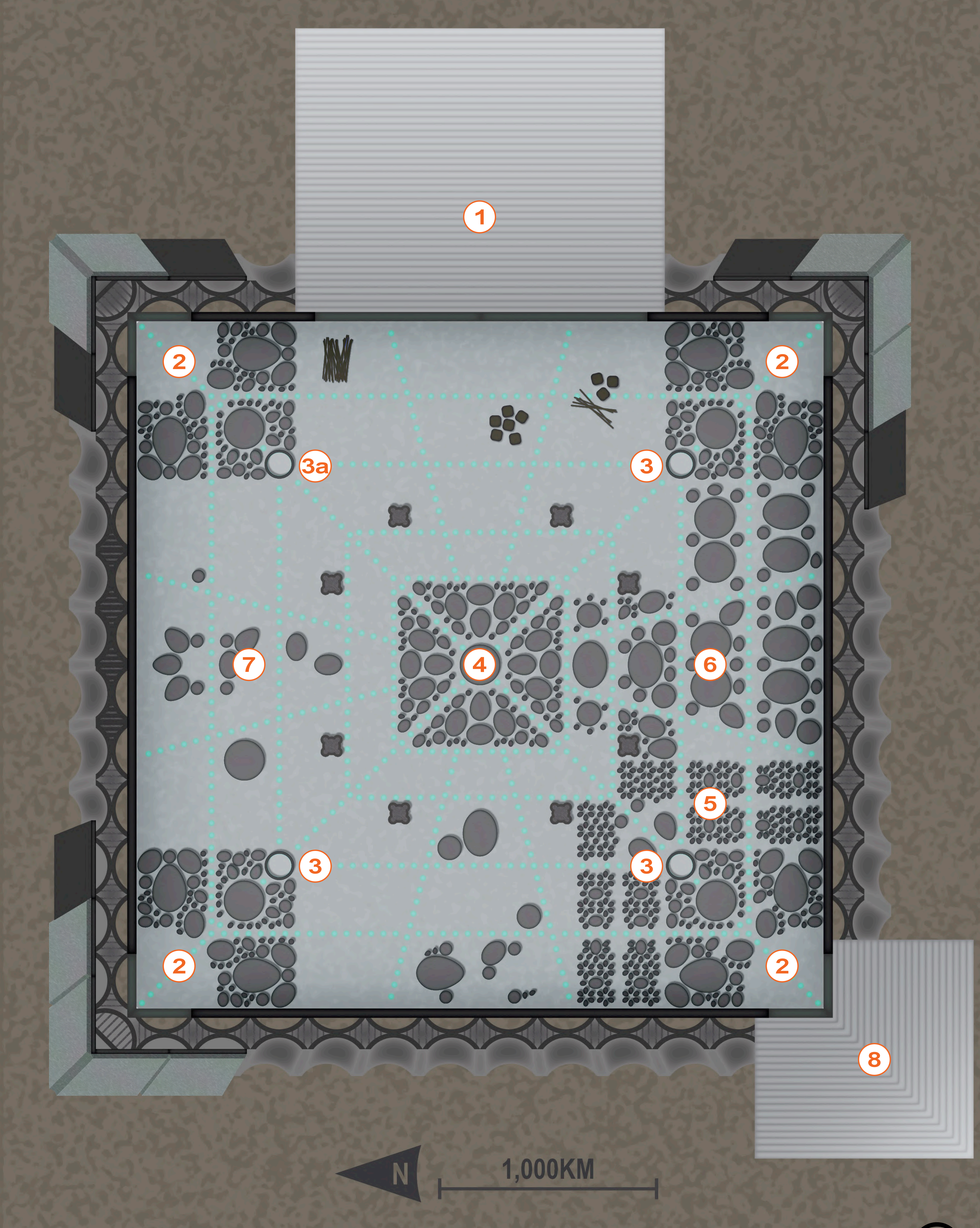
A temporary ramp built on scaffolding allows personnel and equipment to move in and out of one of the access complexes. It is in the process of being dismantled, to be moved to one of the other complexes where work is just beginning. The ramp is still safe enough to use by personnel. This is the most likely access point for the Travellers unless they have been very inventive in their plans to enter the war machine. In addition to the Warriors on guard outside there are Workers and a few Technicians working on the scaffold. They will probably just ignore the Travellers unless threatened, in which case they will flee.

BATTLE EVENT: THE SOUTHERN FLANK

Whilst the Travellers are traversing the fighting decks, enemy forces attempt to clear the southern flank. Some engage troops on the hill and the edge of the forest line with ranged fire, whilst parties are sent into the fissure clear it. If this attack is successful the defenders will occupy the hill and use it as a vantage point to shoot any hostiles attempting to reach the war machine. The attack is uncoordinated and piecemeal but the Droyne are well armed. The Referee should assume 2Dx25 Warriors take part in this early attempt, with others on their way.

If the hill is taken, all checks to resolve clashes outside the war machine are subject to DM-1 as the Travellers’ allies take fire from the flank. A counterattack might drive the enemy off the hill, or sniping from the damaged area of forest could make it untenable. If that is the case, parties cam be sent to flush out the attackers, which could lead to ambushes and close combat. If they can make enough of a nuisance of itself, additional Warriors are diverted to clear it from the flank, imposing a delay of 2D minutes on the advance of the main Warrior force or the next wave to approach the war machine.

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WAR MACHINE WORKING DECKS

The working decks are devoted to heavy machinery that runs the war machine's functions and the Workers that maintain it. Beneath the main working deck is a huge storage area with grav-cranes to move large objects. These are not yet operational, so personnel working here have been provided with robots and lifting equipment. The area contains mostly construction equipment but there are some smaller storage rooms intended to house tools and small spares. These decks are mostly enclosed. The storage deck has huge doors in each side to permit loading of necessary items and equipment. These are operational and for the most part kept closed.

The Travellers will likely reach this deck by way of the grav tubes but there are other options. Warriors on this deck will be alerted by the time the Travellers arrive unless they have done something very clever but they will not have been reinforced. This means that Travellers will face small parties of Warriors who unimaginatively guard their own sectors without making much attempt to cooperate.

ACCESS COMPLEX (1)

The working decks have an access complex like all the others. A handful of Warriors will be stationed here under normal circumstances. A grav lift tube (2) runs down to the fighting decks on the inner corner of the complex, with the outer corner hosting the tube (3) to the next set of decks.

WORKER ACCOMMODATION (4)

This section of the deck is completed in terms of walls and doors but has only been partially fitted out. It is similar to the Warrior accommodation area and may have exhausted Workers sleeping in pods or injured personnel receiving automated medical treatment in others.

CENTRAL SECTION (5)

Unlike other decks, which have their command facilities concentrated in the centre, the working decks are built around an enormous complex of grav lifts used to bring materials up from the storage level below. This area is a framework of platforms with no safety rails. A gas retention field prevents the area from depressurising when the level below is opened to receive a delivery. Retention field projectors will eventually be fitted throughout the machine but at present they are in short supply.

HEAVY MACHINERY SECTION (6)

This area is currently given over to heavy machinery such as forming devices for construction materials. It will eventually be smaller, with an accommodation block built around the access complex and the layout of this prospective construction can be discerned in the flooring on that side of the section. In the centre is a small command complex from which operations are directed.

PENS AND SUBJECT CONTAINMENT (7)

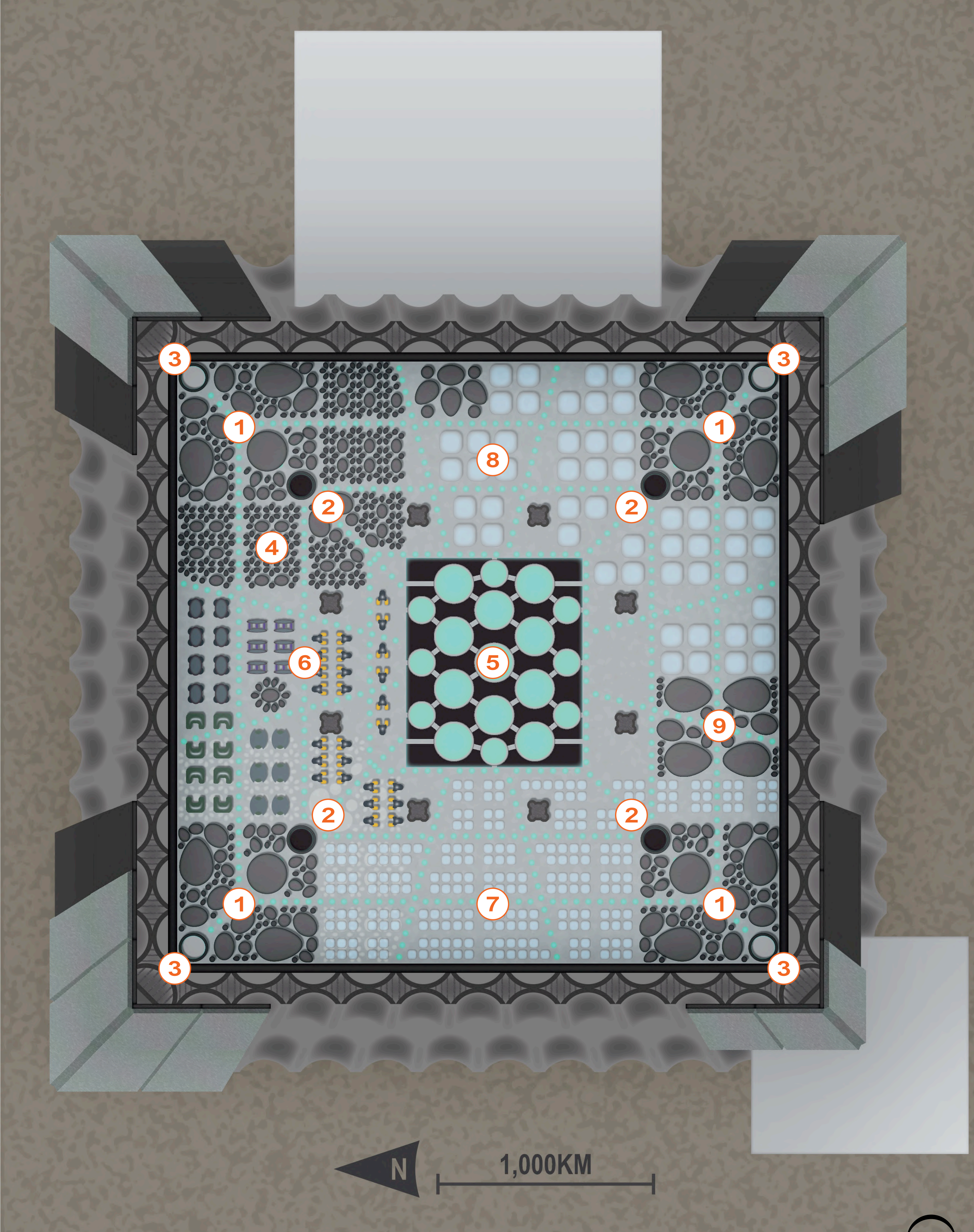
This section will eventually be devoted to machinery and damage-control facilities, with an accommodation block marked out surrounding the access complex. At the present it is given over to temporary confinement facilities which contain hundreds of immature Droyne. They are fated to be converted in the laboratories if the Travellers fail in their mission.

PENS AND ASSET CONFINEMENT (8)

This section is divided into larger confinement blocks than the adjoining area and contains developing creatures produced in the laboratories. Some are ready for deployment and will be loosed against the attackers. Others are obvious failures and dying or not developing quickly enough to be used. Remains are disposed of in a fusion furnace.

LABORATORIES (9)

A combination of laboratory and ritual chamber, this area is used to process juvenile Droyne into whatever creatures the occupiers think will be useful. Some are combat types but Tsyamoykyo has left orders to experiment with construction variants – essentially living heavy lift machinery capable of getting into tight spaces in the machine's structure.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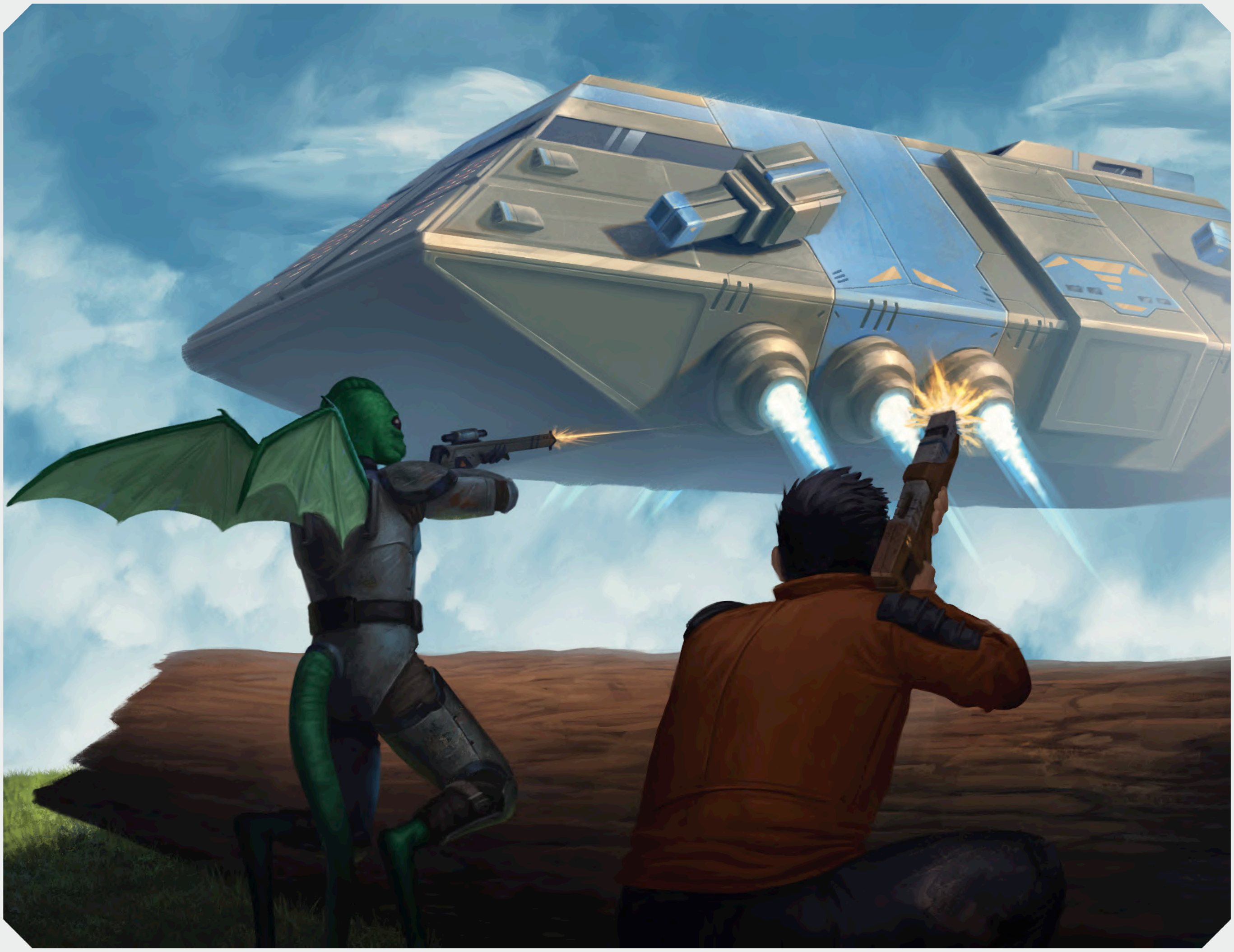
The Travellers may find themselves under attack from creatures turned loose by the defenders but this is unlikely if they move quickly. On the other hand, they may free some of the creatures themselves and try to get them to run amok. A few telepathic prods or physical violence will suffice to make at least some of the creatures turn violent. The mayhem they cause will disrupt the defence of this deck but more importantly they may get in the way of Warriors coming up from below.

BATTLE EVENT: AIR ATTACK!

By the time the Travellers reach the working decks, Ordssess has begun to make a more coherent response. The piecemeal attacks by a few armed grav craft are curtailed and now he sends them against the Travellers' allies. This can be resolved as a clash with DM-6, and will probably result in serious damage or defeat unless the Travellers do something. Ideally, the defenders will use air power to clear the southern flank so they can occupy the hill as described on page 222.

The Travellers could just ignore the situation and hope their allies deal with it. If they do want get involved they have few easy options. There are no weapon system controls on this deck, although there are some on the fighting decks below. If the way is clear the Travellers could go or send someone to take command of the defensive systems. They will get a few shots at the grav vehicle force before they are locked out of the system by the war machine commander.

Other options are always possible. Travellers could open the cargo doors on the deck below and shoot at the grav vehicles, or telepathically mess with their pilots. A creative solution should be rewarded but the Referee must keep in mind that time is pressing. Helping allies is laudable but wasting time is not.



THINKING DECK

The thinking deck is a single layer high, without large storage areas below. It is in some ways more the heart of the war machine than the commanding deck. Most of this deck is open, with four large domed areas surrounding a larger central one. The deck is entirely enclosed but clearly unfinished. Warriors have been sent down from the deck above and others are landing from grav vehicles on the gantry (9). They will fight to the death to keep the Travellers away from the grav shafts but may not realise their objective is not necessarily the top deck of the war machine. The Travellers will face opposition as they move around this deck but until the defenders realise their true aim they will assume the commanding deck is the final objective and organise themselves accordingly.

ACCESS COMPLEX (1)

As with all decks the access complexes contain arrival areas for grav-lift tubes from the lower decks (2) and access points for tubes leading up (3) to the commanding decks. Warriors will be stationed in these areas unless called away.

ACCOMMODATION BLOCK (4)

Accommodation blocks have been constructed around the access complexes. These are more fully fitted out than on the lower decks, although not all are complete. Significant numbers of Drones and Technicians are housed here when not engaged in spiritually and technically preparing the war machine for service.

PLANETARY STRATEGY CHAMBERS (5)

Within a large domed outer structure lies a set of small ritual chambers and a central larger one. These are currently devoted to the situation on Braudel, with a vast interactive map of the planet displayed on the ceiling of the main chamber and smaller globes projected in the surrounding rooms. The focus has thus far been on finding Droyne cities that escaped destruction but once the attack began the Droyne assigned to this chamber began focusing on the local area. The Travellers may be able to gain insight into their strategic thinking by interpreting the maps as a psionic dream and failing that they will be able to monitor the battle and perhaps warn of the enemy's next moves. A Traveller making good use of this chamber gains DM+1 to resolve all actions by their allies. A larger DM might be applied if the Travellers are particularly clever.

SYSTEM STRATEGY CHAMBERS (6)

The layout inside this dome is the same as the others. Its occupants are dedicated to studying the Braudel system and looking for hostile starships. The Travellers can quickly discern they are aware of the surviving Droyne ships but do not possess weapons capable of reaching them.

DISTANT THINKING CHAMBERS (7)

The Droyne assigned to this dome are concerned with long-term planning, running through scenarios for the conquest of the surrounding star systems. If the Travellers allow it to happen they could become lost in a series of theoretical projections: civil war in the Imperium triggered by an assassination attempt on the Emperor… infiltration of political power structures…. economic takeover… a new Frontier War with the Zhodani Consulate… direct assault on the power centres of local space… all manner of scenarios, with infinite variations, can be played out in this chamber.

CHAMBER OF MEMORIES AND THOUGHTS (8)

This set of chambers is dedicated to records and histories, all stored as psionic dreams. The most recent and vivid are off the glorious conquest of Braudel, with Tsyamoykyo depicted standing regally over the destruction and abject capitulation of his enemies. The use of the temporal dislocation device is prominent, along with some of the best explosions caused by antimatter bombs and annihilators.

The whole chamber complex is a monument to Tsyamoykyo's ego, with a staff of Droyne who have no other job but to constantly watch the highlights. The Travellers can learn much here, including how they might go about recalibrating the temporal dislocation device to release Captain Maddox's ship.

THE GANTRY (9)

A temporary set of airlocked doors has been set up, with a gantry for landing grav vehicles. It is currently used to ferry subjects up ready for the conditioning rituals held in the main ritual chambers. Whilst apparently flimsy, the gantry can support a large vehicle without difficulty. It would be possible to climb up the war machine's structure from here.

THE CHAMBER OF THINKING (10)

The central domed structure contains a complex of ritual chambers, with a command chamber at the centre. From here, the technical functions of the machine will be directed. In the interim, a group of specially trained Drones carry out conditioning rituals on those brought before them, duplicating the way senior Leaders have been conditioned to obey Tsyamoykyo. Eventually, they will work through every Leader on the planet.

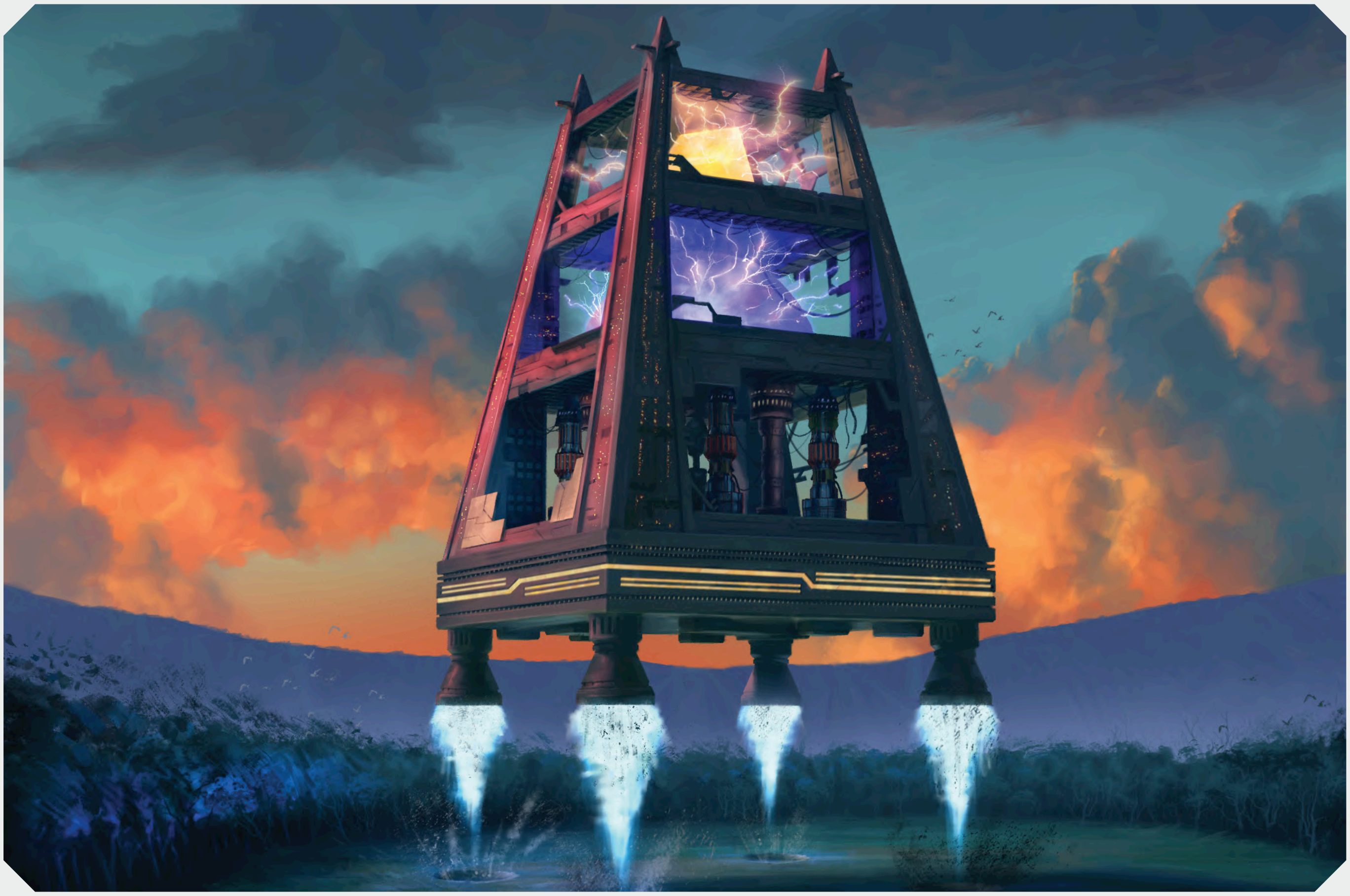
The Travellers can use this chamber to decondition the Leaders of the Oytrip of Vaykouh. This takes just a few minutes, during which a powerful psionic signal blares out from the chamber. At this point the war machine's commander realises what the Travellers are doing and orders every Warrior on the deck to close in and eliminate them.

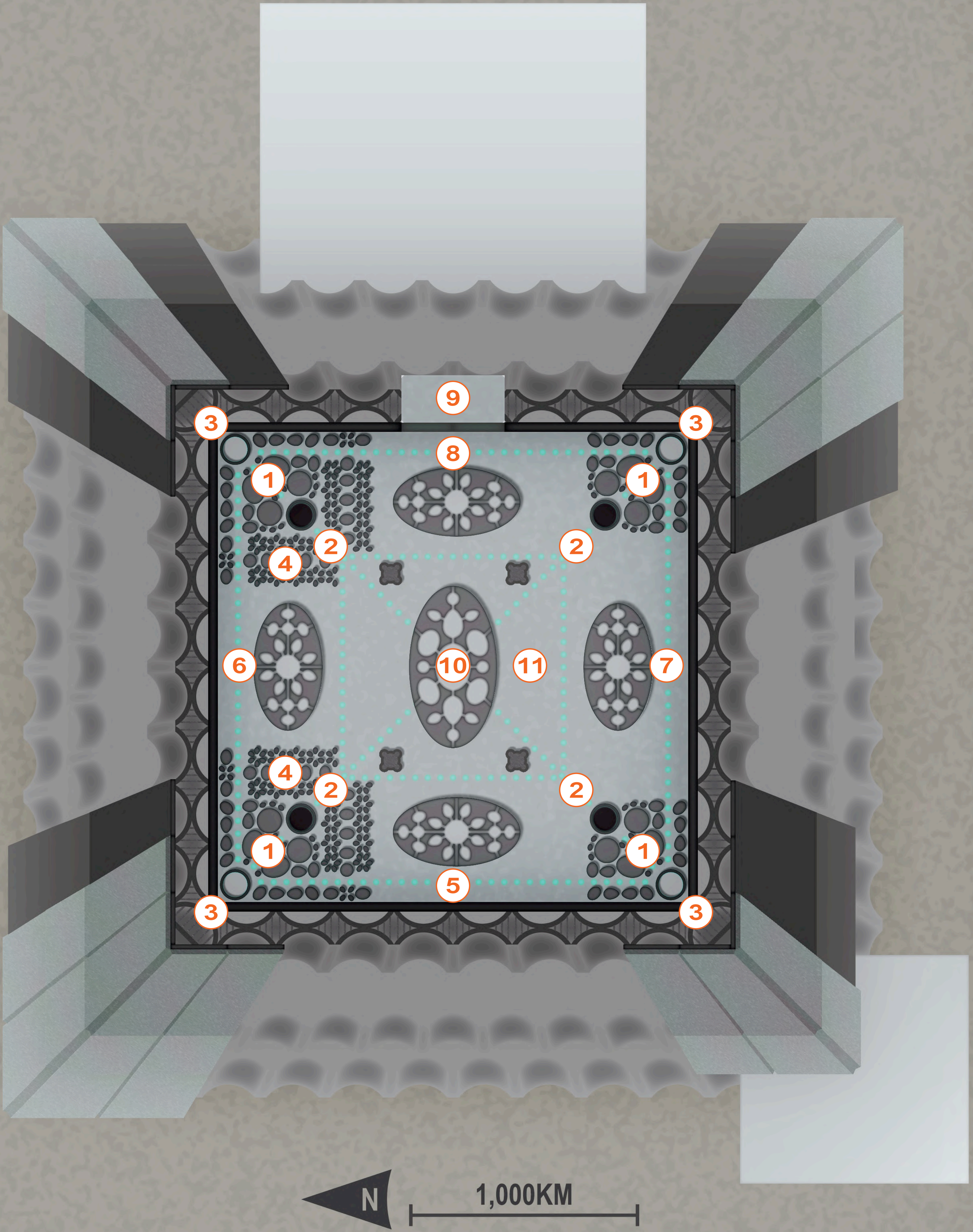
OPEN AREAS (11)

When the war machine is complete, these areas will be left open, with not a speck of dust between the accommodation and ritual areas. At present they contain a small amount of machinery and equipment, and very little cover.

BATTLE EVENT: APOCALYPSE!

Deconditioning takes just a few minutes and as soon as it occurs Ordssess or his successors order the Warriors of the Oytrip to fall back from fighting their kin, and seize control of the war machine. At the same time, the war machine goes into apocalypse mode. It begins to rise on grav lifters, readying weapons of mass destruction. All grav shafts from this level to the one above are shut down. If the Travellers can reach the commanding deck and take control of the war machine, they can save the Oytrip. If not, Vaykouh will burn a second time.

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COMMANDING DECKS

The uppermost decks of the war machine are dedicated to commanding it and dominating whatever planet it is upon. Whilst most functions such as use of major weapons can be controlled locally or from the central command chambers, it is considered more auspicious to have dedicated command areas of a level of ostentation suited to the power they wield. This level is more heavily guarded than the lower decks, not because anyone expected an attack but simply because it is right and correct that such important functions be attended by a suitable number of guards.

Access to this level is a problem. With the grav shafts off and guarded by large numbers of Warriors, another way must be found to get inside. There are two practicable options; one is to go out onto the gantry of the thinking deck and climb up the outside, entering the deck above by means of a maintenance hatch or unfinished area. The other option is to seize a grav vehicle and land on the upper surface, entering by way of the pyramids on the top of the machine.

ACCESS COMPLEX (1)

The commanding decks have an access complex like all the others. A force of Warriors will be stationed here and grav lift tubes from lower decks will be sealed as soon as fighting begins. A tube (2) runs down to the thinking decks on the inner corner of the complex, with one on the outer corner (3) granting access to the upper surface of the war machine by way of the small pyramids on its upper surface. These shafts are disabled once the Travellers reach the thinking deck.

ACCOMMODATION BLOCK (4)

Accommodation blocks have been constructed around two of the access complexes. These are mostly completed and house the entourage of the Leader Yaskiay. These Droyne control the upper deck of the war machine and will defend it to the last.

CEREMONIAL AREAS (5)

Much of the deck is given over to large chambers which serve a mostly ceremonial purpose. This deck is the command centre for a Leader who dominates a world; suitable spaces are needed for him to stride through or gaze thoughtfully at decorated walls before delivering his instructions. There are a few storage areas and marshalling points for Warriors or other castes who may be needed.

LESSER COMMAND COMPLEX (6)

This lesser command complex contains a command chamber which can be optimised for any function. Currently it is devoted to the war machine's most powerful weapons. Taking it out will not prevent them from being used but a transference of control will be necessary; this is more about the mindset of the operators than physical actions that need to be taken. Where a human weapon system has all manner of security lockouts, the Droyne version is more about the operator. A human might ask 'do I have the correct authorisation to fire this weapon?' where a Droyne asks 'am I fit to wield this power?' The end result is the same but the Droyne version is more spiritual. Taking out the weapon command team will necessitate a preparation ritual in whoever assumes command of the device and this will take a few minutes at least.

INCOMPLETE COMMAND COMPLEX (7)

This command complex is still under construction and has not received its control systems. It is beautifully decorated of course but the command podium and associated control positions are inert.

INAUSPICIOUS COMMAND COMPLEX (8)

This command complex is fully operational but is not in use as it is inauspicious. Something went awry when the walls and ceiling were being decorated, necessitating a complete restart which has not yet happened. Someone who does not care about the correct rituals and mindset for issuing the war machine's systems could use this chamber but no Droyne would consider it.

BACKUP COMMAND COMPLEX (9)

This complex is operational and staffed as a backup for the main control area. Like the others it is subordinate to the main chambers and can take over functions only with permission or if the primary control systems are out of action.

PRIMARY CONTROL COMPLEX (10)

The primary control complex is surrounded by accommodation and ceremonial spaces fit for the commander of a world-dominating weapon system. A heavy contingent of Warriors is assigned to guard this area along with Drones and Technicians to keep everything running properly. A large contingent of Sports are kept handy for any messages that must be delivered personally. Telepathy serves for most situations but at times a Sport is required to present orders or requests with proper ceremony. Despite there being few Workers this area of the level is very busy.

The primary control complex is the headquarters and residence of the Leader Yaskiay, a favourite of Tsyamoykyo, who has been assigned to maintain control of Braudel and prepare it for use as a staging post. He considers the war machine to be his personal territory and is not concerned about what happens outside so long as construction continues on schedule.

BATTLE EVENT: CAPTURING THE WAR MACHINE

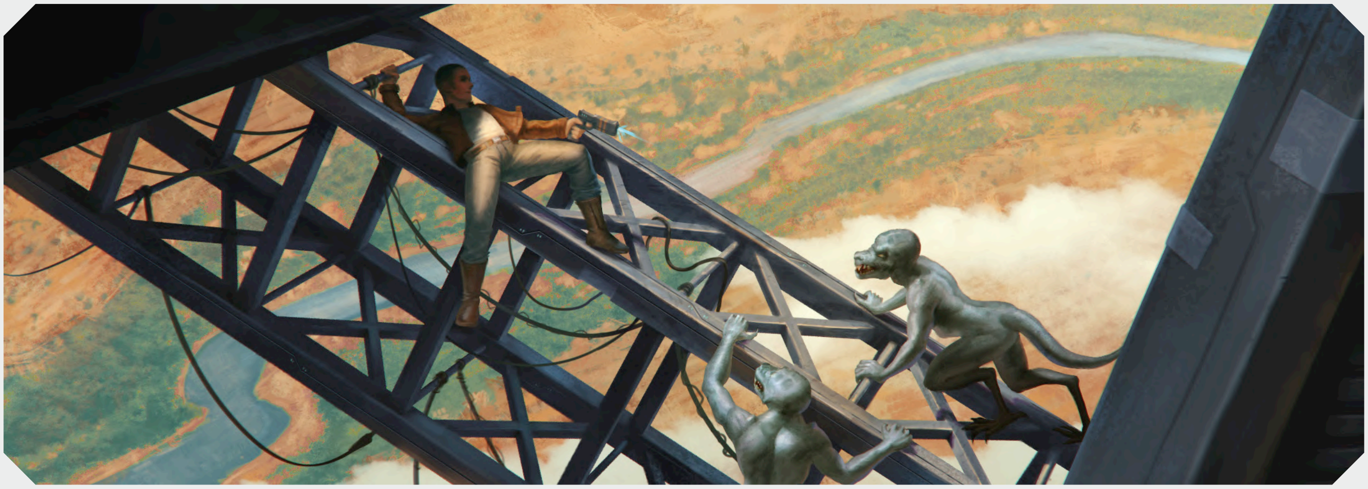
The final ascent to the commanding decks is the finale of this part of the campaign. Depending on how the Travellers go about it they may have to dogfight with grav vehicles, or clamber up the outside of the war machine under fire. Everyone involved will have to contend with the lack of air but there are creatures who are not inconvenienced by that. Unless the Travellers completely cleared out the creature pens, boarders will be sent after them. These creatures scramble up the outside of the war machine without difficulty. The Travellers may have to fight them whilst dangling from half-finished structural members, swinging on bundles of cables to reach a new handhold.

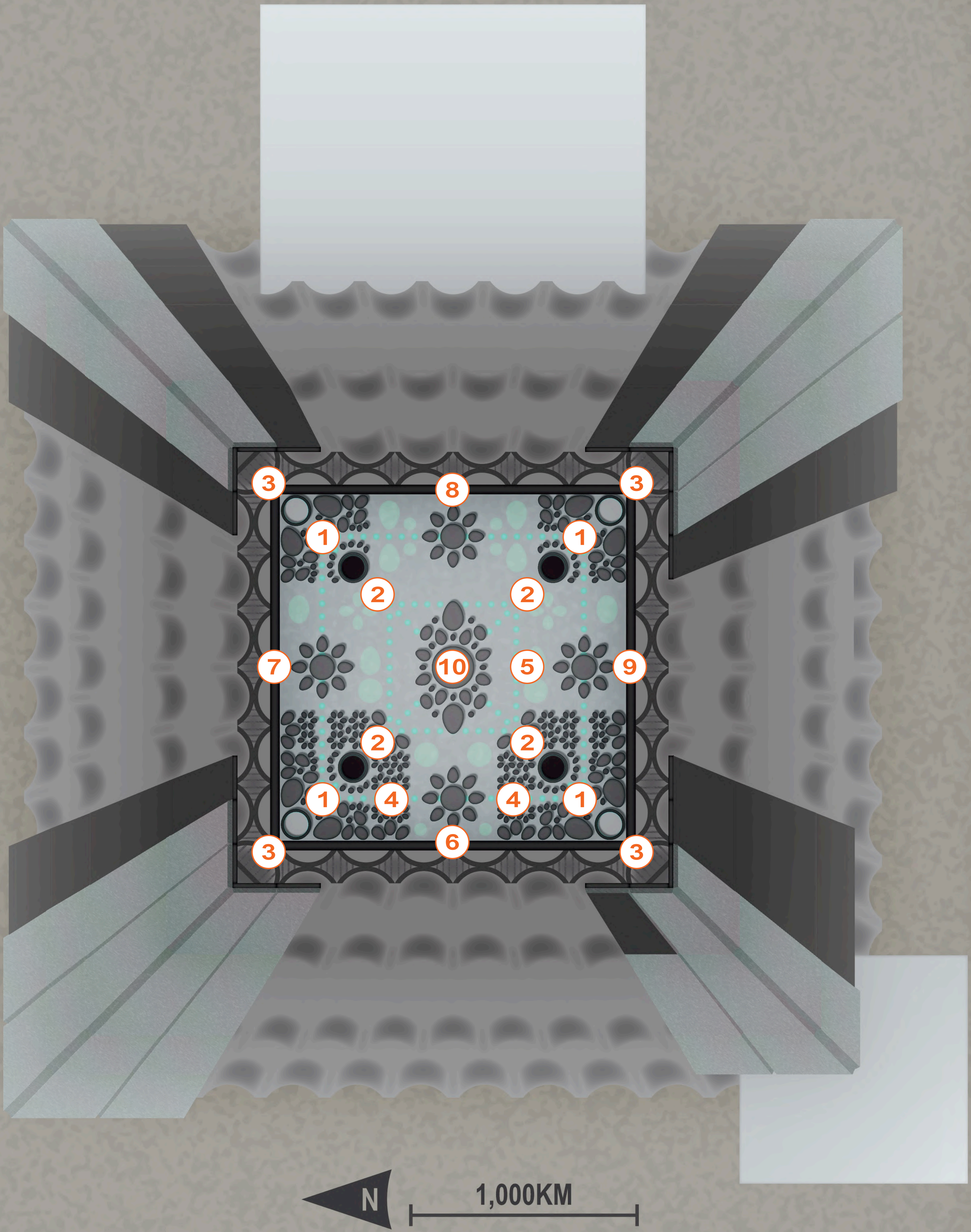
However they do it, the Travellers must reach the upper deck and get inside. Yaskiay's Warriors will oppose them of course, although some can be evaded. Yaskiay himself will not surrender. He would prefer to defeat the Travellers but taking them out by blowing Braudel up around him will suffice. The Travellers might decide to be very direct and just eliminate Yaskiay but he will talk to them if they let him. If so, he tells them they have shown they are worthy of a place in his master's service and should present themselves to receive his mercy and commands. The suggestion is genuine, although Tsyamoykyo is not a master the Travellers would want to serve – he would turn on them sooner or later.

Ultimately, the Travellers will need to eliminate Yaskiay and his guards. They will not surrender or compromise, and are loyal to their master until death. It is is a much deeper conditioning than that imposed on Ordssess and other leaders here on Braudel; Yaskiay has lived his entire life under the thrall of Tsyamoykyo and cannot imagine an existence that does not centre on his service.

VICTORY

With the war machine under their control and the Oytrip no longer obeying Tsyamoykyo, the Travellers have triumphed… at least locally. Tsyamoykyo will surely respond when he discovers what has happened but before the Travellers can tackle that problem they have a more pressing one; the world of Braudel has been liberated but at a terrible price. The Travellers will need to decide what to do next about the Oytrip, the human population, the Omicron Division and Captain Maddox' ship. The pieces are in place for an assault on the fortress of their enemy but there are some difficult decisions ahead.

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THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

The Travellers will be aware of the old adage that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' but they may not be aware that it is inaccurate. In reality, the enemy of their enemy is that and nothing more. Friends are friends and should not be confused with co-belligerents who may turn hostile when the battle is nearly won. That said, the Travellers do need allies for their attempt on the fortress of Tsyamoykyo. Their actions in the battle and afterward may determine whether they have won staunch friends or wary co-belligerents.

THE OYTRIP OF VAYKOUH

Whether Ordssess or another Leader is now in charge, the liberated Oytrip is frightened of what Tsyamoykyo will do once he finds out they have rebelled. An immediate response is unlikely so long as the ship teleporter is kept shut down. For that reason, the Oytrip demands to be permitted to guard it or see proof that it has been dismantled. Friction may result from this if the Travellers do not trust the Oytrip not to return to serving their former master.

There is some merit in such suspicions. One of the hardest decisions the Oytrip's new leaders will have to make is whether to continue to oppose Tsyamoykyo, to offer obedience and beg for forgiveness, or some other course of action. There are few good options but anything will be discussed. Attempts to transplant some of the population with the few available ships will be unfeasible but they could be sent to other Oytrips to request aid. Perhaps some of the Oytrip's people will survive that way, at least for a time. It is a measure of how desperate the Leaders are that they are considering dissolving their community to save some of it. Perhaps it might be possible to disperse into the wilderness and become so insignificant that Tsyamoykyo ignores them? Perhaps a response will be long in coming and the decision can be deferred?

The Travellers know the obvious flaw in all these ideas – Tsyamoykyo is a vengeful and petty master. He will destroy those who defy him even if it will not serve as a warning to others, simply because he enjoys exercising power. There is no getting out of this game for the Oytrip of Vaykouh. Their only choice is which side of the board they play on. If the Travellers can show the Oytrip that they face a stark choice they will avoid their potential allies dissipating in an attempt to hide or avoid retribution but there is a real chance they will choose to side with Tsyamoykyo.

Subordinating themselves to the will of an Ancient goes against all the traditions of the Oytrip but its Leaders are willing to consider the possibility that their forebears were wrong. Tsyamoykyo valued the Oytrip's resources enough to capture and enslave its people; perhaps he might be merciful if even better service is offered? The Travellers should know by now that this is highly unlikely. Even if some were spared to serve, Tsyamoykyo's plans were derailed by the actions of the Oytrip. He will slowly and vindictively wipe it out. Indeed, he would find it particularly delicious to allow survivors to hope they will be redeemed in his eyes, then crush them a little more before apparently sparing the rest. He will torment the survivors like this until he bores of it and in the meantime will use the people of the Oytrip mercilessly. Once their usefulness is gone, or something annoys him, Tsyamoykyo will destroy what remains.

THE GREAT FUTURE-MAKING OF VAYKOUH

The fate of the Oytrip will be decided by its Leaders-of-Leaders in a great ceremonial debate which may take place in the city or outside. Normally outsiders would never even hear of such things but the Travellers may be able to take part if they present themselves well. As always, no matter how powerful the Travellers, they cannot simply walk up to the Leaders and demand to be heard. There are formalities to observe and the request must go through a Sport skilled in such matters. The Travellers may have one in their party, or their allies might be able to find one.

If they can get an invite, the Travellers are permitted to stand among the assembly of Leaders. It is surrounded by rings of Drones, Sports and Warriors but only Leaders are permitted to speak their minds – or rather deliver their thoughts telepathically. Opinions are varied, with all manner of ideas washing back and forth. Now and then a Leader-of-Leaders simply sits down on the ground and begins mediating. This is Krinaytsyu; the ritual of voluntary death. Whether they feel they are inadequate and should be replaced or there is some other reason, after a while more than half the Oytrip's Leaders have decided to die. The remainder are deadlocked.

The Travellers now have a chance to speak, or show the assembled Leaders what is in their minds. The latter is a strange experience for everyone concerned and as it begins some of those engaged in Krinaytsyu stand up and return to their role. What the Travellers show or tell the Oytrip will determine its stance.

The Travellers need to convince the Oytrip first of all that a decision has to be made. There can be no hiding or hoping for mercy. Then they need to make sure the Leaders know their only hope, however slim, is to fight and win. In this, their most potent weapon is Tsyamoykyo himself. If the Travellers can present examples of his behaviour, the Leaders will see that there is no real prospect of mercy; they must conquer or die.

The Travellers can narrate what they show the Oytrip. If they are presenting what they saw first-hand, truthfully, this will be apparent to the Leaders. Honest speculation based upon observation will be apparent as that and is less persuasive but so long as the Leaders know the Travellers have good reason to believe what they are presenting it will be positively received. The problems start if the Travellers make stuff up. They may be able to do so convincingly if they plan ahead, imagine and think through what they are going to present. Failed lies will discredit the Travellers and they may even be ejected from the conference.

Ultimately, the Leaders-of-Leaders must decide whether to fight or surrender, or try something else. Where this goes might have implications for the Travellers if they find themselves suddenly in the middle of a hostile Oytrip. Control of the war machine might be a useful bargaining chip at that point. Hopefully, the Travellers will be able to convince the Oytrip of the necessity of taking direct action against Tsyamoykyo. If so, Warriors and resources will be committed without stint.

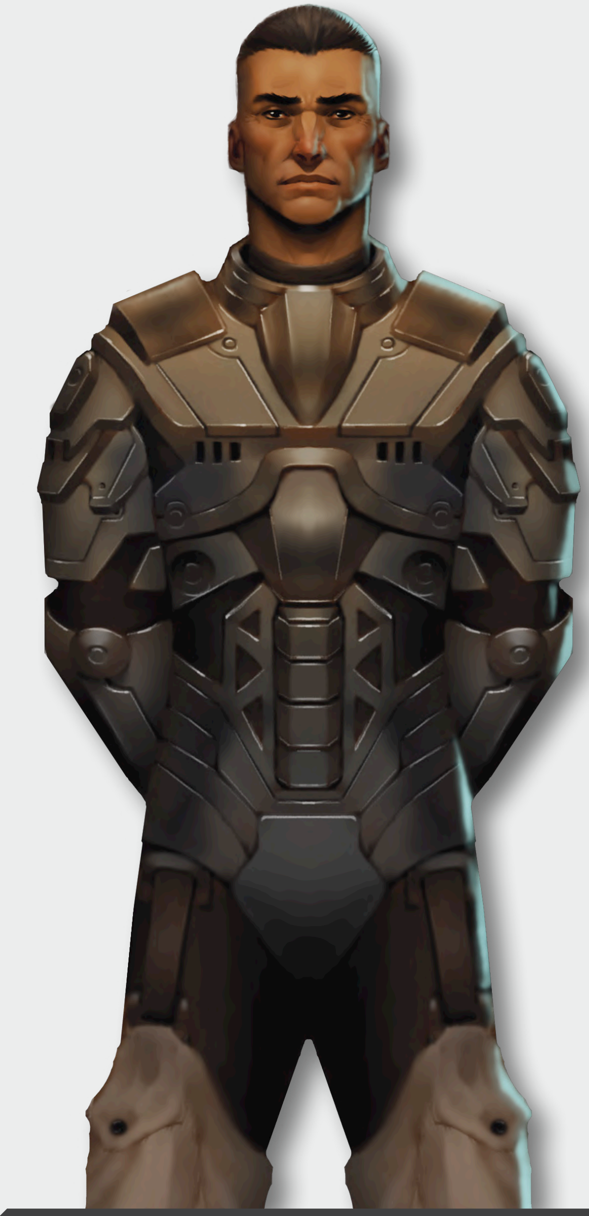
OMICRON DIVISION

The Omicron Division personnel captured by the Oytrip came to fight Tsyamoykyo's fleet and were summarily swatted by it. They were subsequently more or less ignored until the battle began for the war machine. Their commander is the most senior surviving officer, Captain Hollis Bain. The survivors will follow his lead and remain dedicated to their mission but they are apprehensive and Bain will not throw their lives away. As with the Droyne, it will be necessary to win the Omicron personnel over by some means. Their biggest reservation is the Oytrip – first they were allies, then prisoners. Without an explanation and some reason to believe the Oytrip is now reliable, the Omicron contingent will not commit to further operations.

As with the Leaders of the Oytrip, convincing the Omicron personnel is not a simple matter of making a skill check. The Travellers will need to make their case and resist attempts of others to poke holes in their presentation. The Omicron personnel need to be shown there is a credible plan on the table and the means to carry it out. For their part, they are ship crews rather than ground combat specialists. They can fight at need but their arsenal is mainly snub and gauss pistols rather than combat armour and plasma guns. What they can do is crew small craft carrying an assault force, if the Travellers can find something for them to fly. That might just be possible…

CAPTAIN HALLIS BAIN

Bain is a career Omicron operative but has little experience of groundside combat or associated skulduggery. He served most of his career in the Imperial Navy, carefully watched over and groomed for promotion, then transferred to command of a powerful Omicron cruiser mounting the best weapons the Imperium could provide. Encounters with normal threats were embarrassingly easy but when Bain and his crew went up against Tsyamoykyo's fleet they might as well have been rowing canoes. Bain's decision to break off when his ship was seriously damaged saved most of his crew but he knows he escaped at the expense of other vessels that stayed to fire another salvo. He does not fear a court-martial; no-one could judge him more harshly than himself.



HALLIS BAIN, CAPTAIN, IMPERIAL NAVY ASSIGNED TO OMICRON DIVISION

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Male	—

TRAITS	—

STR	5	**INT**	10	**SKILLS**
DEX	6	**EDU**	9	Astrogation 1, Electronics (sensors) 2, Leadership 2, Pilot (starship) 2, Tactics (naval) 3
END	5	**SOC**	9	

WEAPONS	Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2)
ARMOUR	Vacc Suit (+10)

For all of that, Bain neither burns for revenge nor fears what will be said of him. There is too much at stake here and if he gets the idea the Travellers have a means to defeat or even seriously inconvenience Tsyamoykyo he will offer his services and those of any who will follow him. He is adamant on two points however: wounded and those who wish to leave must be provided with transportation back to Imperial space, and the assault on Tsyamoykyo's fortress will be volunteers-only. Bain is willing to let the Travellers make their pitch to his assembled crews but attempts to browbeat or bully personnel into volunteering will be met with opposition.

CAPTAIN MADDOX

Captain Maddox commands *Rustic Idyll*, a converted Imperial Navy carrier equipped with a large contingent of shuttles and some fighters she is not supposed to have. She discovered the location of the Oytrip a century ago from a Droyne Sport named Ayox and was on her way there when her ship was struck by spill over from a temporal dislocation device. If the Travellers want her to join their assault they will have to get her ship out of its strange prison. If Mercedes is still alive, she will strongly advocate the Travellers do so. This is in part to gain an ally but of course Mercedes and Maddox are old friends.

The backflash from the temporal dislocation device extends more than a century up and down the 'conventional t-axis', as temporal physicists might say, essentially a century forward and back in time from the point the weapon was fired. It is not possible to know if the effect spills out 'sideways' in the time dimensions, or what that would mean, or if they exist at all… there are many unknowns in temporal physics.

The centre point of the temporal backflash is the moment of firing, which is quite recent in the Travellers' timeline. *Rustic Idyll* was affected near the 'past' end of the spike, which is why it was displaced whole rather than being obliterated. The backflash has nodes and antinodes at intervals along its temporal projection, causing the vessel to fade completely away from the current universe then back to close proximity. Its closest approach is at a temporal location near to the moment of firing – so round about now – and over time contact will fade over a series of cycles. When the current timeline reaches the 'future' end of the backflash, *Rustic Idyll* will be lost forever.

There is a window of opportunity here, if the Travellers choose to take it. The temporal dislocation device could be calibrated to cancel the backflash, at least some degree, which might pitch the carrier into the current universe. It might also destroy it, or have some entirely unpredictable outcome. Mercedes is keen for the Travellers to try and will try to persuade any Droyne who will listen.

The carrier is a plot element in the finale of the campaign, so if the Travellers do not make the attempt the Referee must assume someone else stepped up. However, it is much better if the Travellers drive the storyline. They are the ones best suited to make the effort, anyway. The Travellers will need to figure out precisely when to target their temporal dislocation device, which could be calculated by someone with good science skills or learned by dream-exploring images on the walls of the command chamber in the war machine. A full and complete record was left, down to the settings on the weapons, for anyone with the skill to manipulate the psi-dream and pull out the relevant information.

Equipped with this information the Travellers can recalibrate the temporal dislocation device to break *Rustic Idyll* loose. They will also witness Tsyamoykyo in all his megalomaniac glory, directing the assault on Braudel and revelling in the inability of his victims to fight back. There is an additional possibility, which the Travellers will witness if it happened – and they decide if it did. If the Travellers wonder whether the temporal dislocation device could be used to fire on a target in the past – say a vessel in the attacking fleet – they will find the answer is yes. Does that mean they could stop the invasion from ever happening by taking out the assault fleet? The answer to that one is no, or at least if they try it they will find they did not succeed.

If the Travellers focus solely on freeing *Rustic Idyll* the weapon will discharge and some kind of backflash event will have been recorded. The temporal anomaly vanishes from the current timeline but there is no sign of *Rustic Idyll*. If the Travellers try to target the invasion fleet the same thing happens to the carrier but other ships are also hit. Tsyamoykyo's flagship is not, perhaps because it is carrying the weapon that is being fired at it but three others are caught in the blast. One suffers a direct hit and is obliterated, its particles scattered along the timeline in both directions. The others suffer some sort of energy disturbance then, sometime after the attack, they vanish. What happened to them remains a mystery – perhaps one for the Travellers to explore later. There may be one or two ships full of Ancients technology and devoted servitors of Tsyamoykyo out there, somewhen along the timeline.

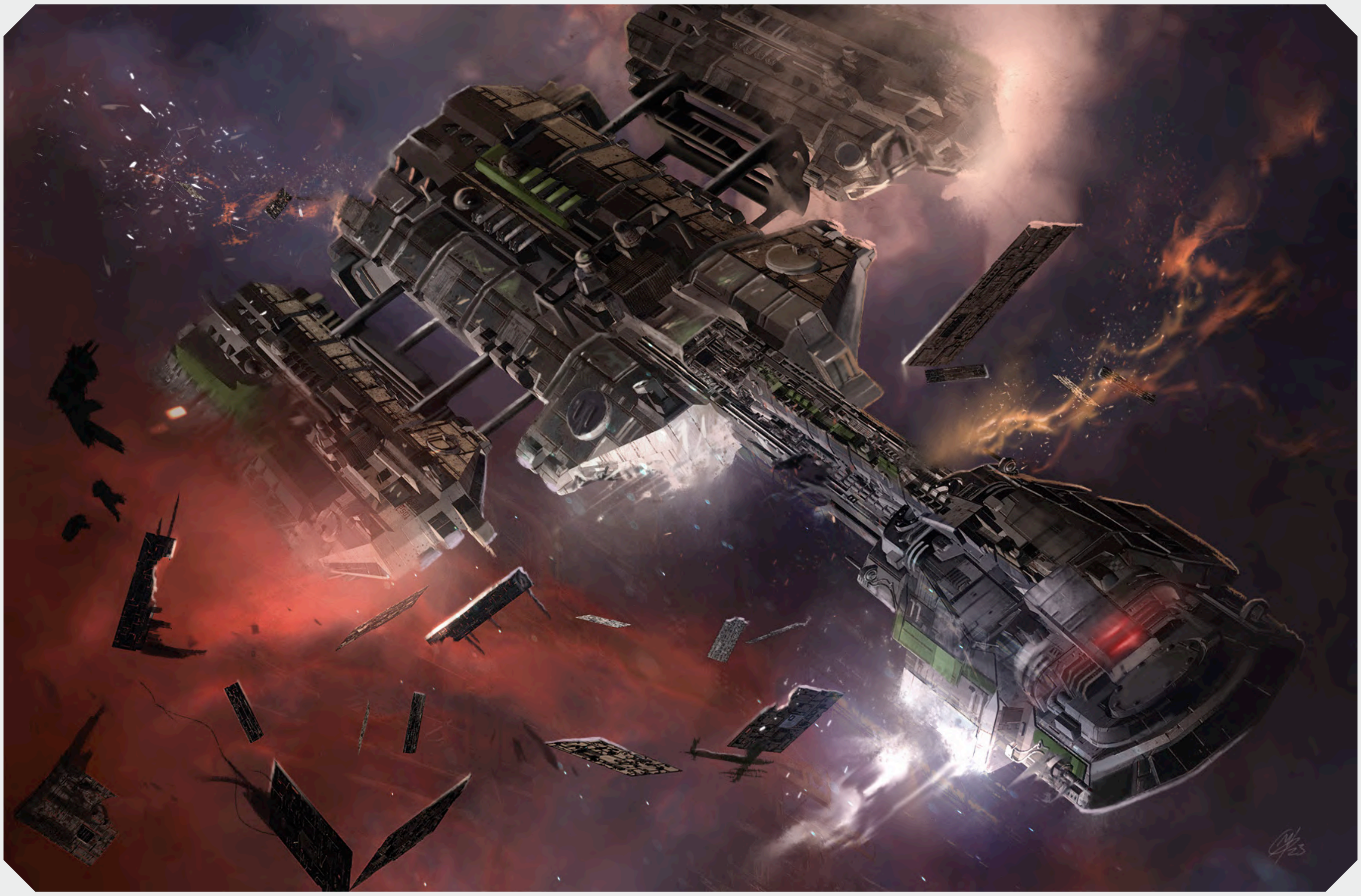
Tsyamoykyo orders the temporal dislocation device to be shut down when the Travellers' shot reaches his point on the timeline. This prevents the Travellers from taking another shot into that time-location, for reasons that remain unclear. His Technicians are very confused about what has happened and cannot offer a clear explanation of why the device has apparently not functioned as expected. After disintegrating a couple of them, Tsyamoykyo returns to the business at hand; kerb-stomping the Oytrip of Vaykouh. In the present, there is no sign of Maddox or her ship.

DISTRESS CALL

A while after the temporal dislocation device shot, sensors pick up a wild energy disturbance, out of which is coming a weak distress call. It is *Rustic Idyll*, almost completely disabled and drifting. She will not hit the planet but will not entirely miss either; the carrier will be affected by Braudel's gravity enough to accelerate her and put her on a new path which will take Maddox and her crew out of the system. Their life support, power and supplies will have given out by then.

It is possible to make contact with Maddox, who does not know she has been stuck in a temporal anomaly for a century. She will not initially recognise Mercedes, whose appearance has changed a lot in the intervening time. Maddox wants information and is not the sort to allow someone else to demand answers from her until she has what she needs, although she is willing to divulge some basics if it seems that makes assistance more likely. If she can be convinced she is talking to Mercedes or friends of hers, Maddox is likely to become a lot more cooperative. Calling her by her real name – Banni Seliar – will certainly get her attention.

In short, Maddox conducted expeditions to various Ancients sites and at some point was befriended by a Droyne Sport named Ayox. He is aboard her ship right now – Mercedes is overwhelmed at this news and Ayox will be able to confirm that, for all the changes of appearance, the woman speaking to him is his old friend Mercedes. Eventually, Ayox told Maddox about his Oytrip's mission to oppose Tsyamoykyo. She had

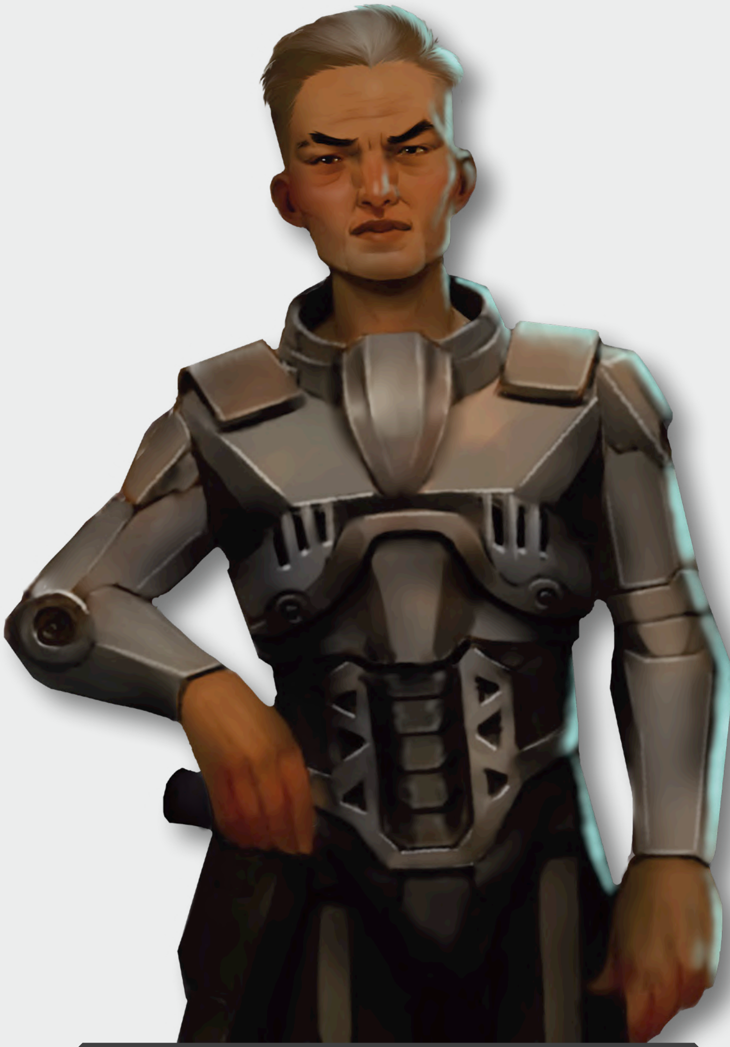


recently found some artefacts that might be useful, so decided to bring them to the Oytrip as gifts in the hope of forging an alliance. Just as her ship was on approach something happened. Maddox cannot explain it beyond 'everything went crazy and it hurt'.

Currently, the crazy is fading. Sensor readings are still distorted, controls are unresponsible or erratic and the ship has suffered major – and inexplicable – structural damage. It might be possible to regain control but at present the engineering crew are baffled. Interference seems to be the problem but it is unpredictable and a source cannot be found. The Travellers will have to explain to Maddox what has happened, which will seem like a pretty unlikely story even to someone who has plundered Ancients sites. However, if they can manage, she suggests the Travellers come aboard and assist her engineers.

Getting aboard is a slight challenge, as the ship is tumbling and spitting out discharges of energy at random intervals. A good pilot should be able to match the tumble well enough and the discharges do not cause damage. They do, however, cause control and sensor interruptions in normal craft. If the Travellers are using a ship with Ancients technology aboard the effect is greatly diminished. Maddox and her crew are not ready to completely trust anyone, so the Travellers will be met at the docking bay by an armed party and shown to the engineering section. They will note serious structural damage in some areas, whilst most surfaces have at least some pitting and flakes knocked loose. Organic matter seems to be intact, although the crew are hurt and tired after being stuck out of time for an unknown period.

Eliminating the energy interference is a matter of converting it to a type that can be controlled and containing it or bleeding it off, perhaps by a controlled discharge through the ship's jump grid. The ship has absorbed – or perhaps generated – a great deal of exotic energy as a result of the temporal dislocation. If the Travellers can come up with a plausible way to get rid of it, the Referee should adjudicate this positively. In short, solving this problem requires the Travellers



BANNI SELIAR, AKA MAD CAPTAIN MADDOX

SPECIES		**GENDER**		**AGE**
—		Female		—
TRAITS			—	
STR	8	**INT**	11	**SKILLS**
DEX	5	**EDU**	8	Ancients Tech 2, Astrogation 2, Gun Combat (Slug) 1, Leadership 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Science (physics) 2, Tactics (naval) 1
END	6	**SOC**	6	
WEAPONS		Compact Energy Pistol (4D)		
ARMOUR		Vacc Suit (+10)		

to think about an unusual situation and come up with an out-of-the-box solution. There might be other ways to handle the problem, some easier and some more complex but the Travellers are driving this story and it is their actions that matter.

RECRUITING MADDOX

Captain Maddox can be convinced of the necessity of opposing Tsyamoykyo quite readily. Indeed, her friend Ayox made it clear long ago – although not in their personal timelines – that he was a threat to the free people of Charted Space. Maddox had already thrown in her lot with the Oytrip of Vaykouh and was on her way to offer her services. She expected to have to make a case for her involvement and now she is being asked to join the fight. Her only reservation is – can she make any difference? Her people are now a century out of time and need to come to terms with that. They have been harmed directly by Tsyamoykyo and most want payback. Maddox wants in, however she will not immediately say so.

The reunion between Maddox and Mercedes – and Ayox – is a complex one. To Maddox and her people it is still 1019, give or take some aches and pains. Mercedes has lived through a century of adventure. She will have to tell Maddox that the third survivor of their adventure, Lipar Ina Lea, is long dead. He reinvented himself as Jon Leask and became a prominent historian, moonlighting as Professor A – an Ancients Expert. He lived a good and full life, and left behind a legacy. Few mortals can achieve more. All the same, he is gone and whilst Maddox never liked him all that much he was a colleague and fellow survivor of their adventure. It is clear that she needs time to process all this… but there is none to be had.

MERCEDES

Mercedes is in, all the way, and will try to recruit others. She is still adamant that she is going to kick Tsyamoykyo's door in and beat him to death if that is what it takes. During the battle for Braudel she consulted with her friends among the Droyne hiding in the outsystem and obtained their cooperation. They have a handful of ships and are willing to send some for help or to transport human wounded home in return for an alliance with the majority. Up to now Mercedes has been full of ideas and may have driven the Travellers to some extent but at present she has little idea how to push forward. However, the pieces are now all in place. If the Travellers fail to connect them Mercedes might be able to offer some insight.

PREPARATION

The Travellers should by now have access to everything they need to enter Tsyamoykyo's pocket universe and confront him. The ship teleporter atop the war machine can transport a vessel as large as *Rustic Idyll*, which is sufficient to move a fighting force that would have at least a chance of reaching the stronghold. There should be enough Warriors to make the attempt, providing the Oytrip of Vaykouh is coming. If these components are not in place there may be another way; perhaps a smaller ship can slip through with an elite group, or maybe the Travellers will find an entirely different method. What matters is getting them on the ground and into proximity with Tsyamoykyo.

How, once that is done, to kill him? If the battle between Yaskoydray and Seven is anything to go by, just pouring in firepower will not be enough no matter what sort of personal weaponry the Travellers may be packing. Starship-grade ordnance should suffice but with the level of shielding available to the Ancients getting a telling shot will be a challenge, and any craft mounting a suitably large weapon will be a priority target.

There are two practicable methods. One would be to collapse the pocket universe with Tsyamoykyo inside. This would destroy everything and everyone that could not evacuate in time. However, Tsyamoykyo might have access to a secret teleporter that allows him to escape elsewhere. He would lose his base and his best servitors and would likely be out of the picture for centuries or millennia, but could re-emerge someday. The only way to be sure is to get his shields down and deliver sufficient injury that he cannot survive. This means locating the source of his shielding once inside the pocket universe and that will have to be done on the fly. However, everything up to that point can be planned in detail.

The planning and preparation period can be used as a change of pace before the campaign finale. The Travellers have a chance to renew friendships or make new ones, learn about the Oytrip's history or confront potential problems before they fully develop. If the Travellers succeed in their coming endeavour they will be in a position to shape the galaxy. If they fail, they may live on in the form of their final invention: a yurfal burger served on a bun made from semi-wild corn. These little memories are more than just moments in passing; they may be what anchors the Travellers to normality after they have won, or what enables them to resist the crushing mental powers of an Ancient.

The Referee should let the Travellers take their time over preparations, in terms of playing time. In-game, every hour is precious because Tsyamoykyo might be preparing a new attack, or just popping back for a visit. If the Travellers' attack arrives ahead of the news that Braudel has been liberated, defences may be off guard. Surprise will not last long but it will provide an opportunity to strike first. A good plan will make that count.

ADVANTAGES

The preparation stage will allow the Travellers to accrue advantages which they can use during the finale of the campaign. Those that make little effort will have to rely on their wits and skill checks but Travellers who think about what they are about to do – and especially those who think creatively – will have extra cards in their deck, so to speak. An Advantage can be deployed any time the Traveller needs it but can only be deployed once. Each Advantage can be used to narrate a way out of a disaster, for the Traveller or someone else, and is then expended. Referees should note the use of the word 'narrate' – Advantages over-rule skill checks. They cannot be used to do the impossible or as a win-button but provide a way to struggle through the perils to come – albeit sometimes at great cost.

For example, a Traveller roleplayed their developing friendship with an elderly yurfal-wrangler during the Land Yacht chapter and the Referee rules that Traveller now has the Loyal Friend Advantage. Kramis is bad-tempered and sarcastic but she will stick with the Traveller to the end. When the Traveller is hit by a disintegrator beam and the dice say they are no longer anything but a cloud of atoms, the situation is reluctantly avoided by playing the Loyal Friend Advantage. Kramis takes the hit instead.

Advantages can be accrued in various ways. One is good planning and clever use of resources. Alternatively, the Referee may award them for good roleplaying and getting invested in the game universe. A Traveller can have multiples of the same Advantage but if they start 'grinding for Advantages' the Referee should stop awarding them.

ADVANTAGES: INTERPERSONAL

Some Advantages may be accrued without realising there is a benefit to be had. These are the moments where a Traveller's actions come back to reward them – or not – when everything is at its worst. For example, during the preparation phase a Traveller does something meaningful in terms of immersion and roleplay but unconnected with preparations for the assault. They may be awarded the Anchored Advantage.

Anchored: In a moment of mental crisis the Traveller recalls an irrelevant but meaningful moment. This should be entirely mundane, such as cooking burgers on a jury-rigged antimatter stove for new friends and companions, or personal. A memory of standing under the silent stars with friends, just looking up, may be sufficient to allow the Traveller to shrug off a mental attack. They recall who they are and what they are fighting for, returning to the fight after a moment of confusion or doubt.

Forethought: The Traveller or someone else actually does have that item they thought everyone forgot to bring! Whilst everyone else was looking at the big picture, this individual thought it through and realised a rope, or wire cutters, or an industrial plasma-cutting charge, might be needed. This Advantage can be used to make a quite unlikely item available but cannot provide a battle-winning weapon. It can be awarded for Travellers making a solid effort at planning – they cannot be expected to think of everything but their followers might be inspired to try.

Resurgence: A person or group that would otherwise be defeated and seeking surrender or escape rallies and makes a new attempt. This might be a military unit or group of small craft that seemed to have been annihilated; somehow the survivors regrouped and found reinforcements. This Advantage would normally be awarded to a Traveller who has inspired people by example or otherwise won them over.

Loyal Friend: A loyal friend or follower saves the Traveller or sacrifices themselves for the mission. This might be someone the Traveller did not even know existed. Perhaps this person feels they owe their life to the Traveller but is too shy to speak to them so just follows in the hope of helping. Alternatively, this may be someone the Traveller has got to know well over time. This Advantage is best awarded for roleplaying incidents in which the Traveller does something that has no obvious gain.

ADVANTAGES: INTEL

The first stage in creating any plan is to gather intelligence. At present the Travellers can only guess at what might lie within the pocket universe. No-one from Braudel has been there, so there is no first-hand information. If any servitors of Tsyamoykyo have survived they will not reveal anything by choice, even if the Travellers stoop to torture. There are, however, other ways.

By now the Travellers may have become accustomed to using psionic dreams. If they can impose one on a servitor they can direct the dream to reveal the layout of the pocket universe and what defences are in place. A mediocre attempt, in terms of poor skill checks and little effort on the part of the Travellers, reveals generalities. Those who play out the dream in detail can learn far more and should be awarded one or more Advantages.

There is another way to scout out the pocket universe. The records embedded in the décor of the command and ritual chambers of the war machine commemorate some of the greatest moments of Tsyamoykyo's reign. Working through this monument to his megalomania will provide some insight into how he thinks as well as a decent outline of the pocket universe.

Another Way Around: The Traveller is aware of an obscure serviceway, access hatch or other means to get past an obstacle or into a secure area. This Advantage will be awarded to someone who looks for such details of the pocket universe. It can only be used to find a way into Tsyamoykyo's sanctum if the Travellers have exhausted all options and will otherwise be defeated.

Dead Spot: The Traveller is aware of a dead spot; an area where a certain system does not work or a particular weapon cannot fire. This may be due to terrain, interactions between shields and other systems, or some other plausible circumstance put forward by the Traveller. This Advantage is awarded to those who look for areas where the pocket universe's weapons are less effective.

Timings: The Traveller is aware of the timings of relevant factors, such as how long it takes for the ship-killer guns to recharge or the interaction between a force field and nearby weapons. They may declare a short period during which a field is down or a weapon cannot engage. This cannot be enough to allow a major system to be crippled but it is sufficient to set up an action like racing an assault team through the gap in the time available. This Advantage is awarded to Travellers who carefully observe how the pocket universe works.

What He Wants to Hear: The Traveller suddenly realises they know exactly what Tsyamoykyo wants to hear at this moment – whether that is a plea for mercy, a reminder of that other time he crushed a similarly worthless foe, or some other appeal to his ego. He will pause a moment to consider what the Traveller is saying but will not be swayed by it. This Advantage will not work if Tsyamoykyo is in mortal danger but in a situation where he thinks he is in control it will delay him from taking action for a few moments. This Advantage is likely to be awarded to someone who has studied the enemy's psychology in detail.

ADVANTAGES: PREPARATIONS

It is certain that the Travellers will want to equip their assault force with the best weapons and defensive equipment available. This goes without saying and it is unlikely the force will knowingly under-prepare. However there are some preparations that could give additional Advantages if the Travellers choose to implement them. These are not the only options; the Travellers should be given credit for clever ideas.

Decoys and Distractions: *Rustic Idyll* or some other craft could be rigged with decoy launchers. These might be clever or rather crude. A device designed to let loose a small quantity of antimatter would cause effects that would white out even advanced sensor equipment. This is a bit of a two-edged sword, as it would mess up friendly targeting as well, but it might be useful. More subtle electronic warfare and decoys could be created to affect only the enemy but, given the technology gap, blinding sensors is more viable than actively deceiving them.

Anti-Personnel Weapons: If the Travellers have time they could create anti-personnel weapons to be deployed from a starship. These might include sandcaster canisters repurposed to scatter bomblets, or incendiary devices. Such weapons could be used to clear an area quickly but are rather indiscriminate.

Borrowing a Big Gun: Weapons from the war machine could be crudely retrofitted to a starship. The temporal dislocation device can only be used once every few minutes, making it likely the Travellers will only get one shot. However, it will destroy almost anything and will work through most shields. The device could be used as a deus ex machina of sorts – if the Travellers can get a precise location for Tsyamoykyo it could be used to destroy his body or his archive… but not both in the same shot. Pretty much any other target is fair game.

The Travellers can attempt any sort of preparations they want, so long as they can make a plausible case for being able to throw something together quickly enough. Their time is limited and once they arrive in Tsyamoykyo's pocket universe they will have to cope with what they have or improvise on the spot.

THE PLAN

In order to defeat Tsyamoykyo, the Travellers need to enter his pocket universe and destroy him. They could just barge in and hope for the best but such a seat-of-the-pants effort is unlikely to succeed. A plan might be a good idea. Ideally, the Travellers will stack the deck in their favour before they launch their assault. Mercedes and others can advise but if possible the Travellers should be the ones deciding what to do. Some information is available about the pocket universe and Tsyamoykyo's fortress within it, in the form of records and images stored in the war machine. The Travellers will at least have an idea of the layout of the fortress.

Entry will have to be made by teleporter. There are no other options. If the Travellers want to use the ship teleporter they will need to be in a ship, vehicle, or at least a framework of metal. The personnel teleporter in the control chambers of the war machine does not require the teleportees to be encased in metal. The Travellers might wonder if they could teleport a bomb into the fortress. The answer is yes, they could, but damage will be limited by all the shielding in place. Personnel casualties would likely be high, so teleporting an area-clearance device ahead of the assault party is a viable option.

The default assumed plan is for the Travellers to enter the fortress ahead of the assault and attempt to scout suitable options or even make a surprise assassination attempt. *Rustic Idyll* will be loaded with an assault force in the meantime – the Omicron Division personnel will crew the ship and its small craft, and Droyne Warriors will lead the ground attack. The carrier is not designed for atmospheric operations but will survive a single descent onto the ship teleporter pad. From there she will be teleported into the middle of the fortress.

The assault will be a serious attempt to overthrow Tsyamoykyo but realistically the Travellers are the best hope for success. Therefore the attack will be made as a diversion and everyone involved must be considered expendable. Mercedes and Captain Maddox have some experience of Ancients installations and might be able to figure out a way to get into Tsyamoykyo's sanctum. They will certainly try but the Travellers need to assume everything rests on them. They must succeed or everyone will die. The Omicron people, the crew of *Rustic Idyll* and the Droyne are willing to take appalling risks to give the Travellers their shot at victory; it is up to them to take it.

TSYAMOYKYO'S UNIVERSE

Tsyamoykyo's pocket universe is different to those created by other Ancients. Most Ancients pinched off a section of the universe around a star and moved planets to orbit it. Not so Tsyamoykyo, once the least of the Ancients. He took a larger section of the universe and played around with it until he was satisfied. The portion of this universe actually used by Tsyamoykyo is rather small, consisting of a single inhabited body and a few outlying facilities.

Tsyamoykyo's pocket universe centres on an artificial black hole. How he created this wonder is not immediately apparent. It has about 3.65 Sol masses and creates a gravitational centre for the universe around which no less than 11 other stars orbit. Ten of these are in eccentric orbits that take them close to the black hole then away again, losing some of their mass each time. These stars will be swallowed eventually, or stripped of their matter and energy in millions of years, but for now they feed the hole. Occasionally Tsyamoykyo launches a particularly hated enemy into the black hole – either in a capsule or by actually hurling them out of a gravity-shielded ship.

The hole spews two jets of plasma and radiation from its poles, which describe arcs across the internal space of the pocket universe. This is rather unhealthy for anything nearby but provides a source of intense power which Tsyamoykyo sometimes has need of. The rest of the time, he is pleased to be able to look up and see the fires of his ego raging across the universe.

The feeder stars have long ago lost any planets, although this was not due to gravitational effects. Two gas giants orbit the 11th sun, one of which serves as a gravitational anchor for Tsyamoykyo's home. It can better be thought of as a station than a world, taking the form of a flat disc kept in place by powerful gravitational engines. The disc can be turned over to face its sun or the gas giant, or directed towards the glorious dance of the black hole and feeder stars. Power is mostly derived from the black hole's plasma jets by way of mobile stations that can be moved in or out of them.

The second giant has what appears to be an unusually large number of very dense moons. These are in fact artificial constructions created by sorting and compressing matter from bodies that once orbited the pocket universe's other stars. They are not moons – they are stockpiles. The process is not complete; some of the bodies still retain features of a naturally occurring planet but are being steadily processed by giant machines that devour their matter and spit out dense blocks of pure materials or needed alloys.

One consequence of this grandiose building style is that the entry point to the pocket universe is never in the same place. A thorough analysis of the complex orbital mechanics of the system enables the location to be predicted but without this information it would be completely impossible to enter the pocket universe from outside without using a pre-set method such as a ship teleporter whose partner was elsewhere. This security measure should render Tsyamoykyo unassailable but he has compromised himself by creating a link to the war machine on Braudel. He views it as a means to launch his invasion of Imperial space, under his sole control and has not recognised it as an avenue for attack. After all, who would *dare?*

The shape of the pocket universe is not constant. It is shaped roughly into an ovoid, with the black hole at one focus point and the eleventh star at the other. Gravitational interactions between the hole and its associated stars, as well as stresses caused by the plasma jets, cause the universe to distort on a constant basis. This is hard to detect, as anything reaching the outer edge re-enters from a different point. In a spherical universe this would be predictable; the object would emerge on a reciprocal course at the opposite side. In this universe the course and emergence point are much more variable.

There is another anomaly; light and energy from the suns and the black hole should be returning from all directions and over time the sky would become unbearably bright. Yet it is black. All that energy must have gone somewhere but the Travellers could spend centuries figuring out how Tsyamoykyo did it.

Those who dreamed his histories will be aware of a great project to gather all this energy and use it to power his station. There were easier ways to do that, so other than creating a dark sky there does not seem to be a point – but those who have come to understand Tsyamoykyo will realise he did it mainly to demonstrate that he could.

TSYAMOYKYO'S STATION

Tsyamoykyo built himself a world in the form of a thick, flat disc. One side is his home, where his servitors are gathered. The other is mostly bare, black rock. That side houses entry points for his ships, which are built, maintained and stored inside the station-disc. Movement between fleet hangars and the inhabited surface is by teleporter. Most of the important installations are on the upper surface of the disc, with layers of hive-cities beneath. These are inhabited by Droyne who have never known anything but subservience to a capricious Ancient. All mundane work goes on within the disc but great projects are carried out on the surface where Tsyamoykyo can see them.

The outer edges of the disc have no handrails or safety devices, and the artificial gravity field stops sharply at the edge. A gas retention field prevents atmospheric escape but a person could take a running jump – or be thrown – out into space. Tsyamoykyo sometimes uses telekinesis to dispose of displeasing servitors in this manner. The sides of the disc are formed from standard Ancients building materials to a depth of about one kilometre, after which they are made of the same smooth black rock as the rest of the lower section. This rock is artificial and very similar to a fine black gneiss.

Protruding from the sides of the disc are blisters containing shields and weapon mounts. There are layers upon layers of shields protecting against all manner of threats, ranging from disintegrators to kinetic energy projectiles. It might be possible for sufficient firepower to batter through the layers one at a time and then knock out the projectors, but Tsyamoykyo constructed his defences with the Ancients at the height of their power in mind and set them up such that a major fleet would require months to blast through.

Weapon mounts include disintegrators, meson guns, annihilators, antimatter streamers, assault force teleporters, antimatter missiles, multi-stage gravity/annihilator weapons and others, some of which the Travellers might not even have a name for. Each mount is independently powered and can only be reached by teleporter. The firepower available is unimaginable. In short, an assault from outside the shields is impossible by any meaningful standard.

THE SHIP TELEPORTER (1)

The ship teleporter is surrounded by projector towers which create the teleportation field. There are no weapons aimed at the teleporter pad as it has never occurred to Tsyamoykyo that a threat might come from this direction. The pad is large enough to easily accommodate *Rustic Idyll* and other craft besides. When a craft appears on the pad, automated support systems attach diagnostic and supply conduits. These take the form of snaky tentacle-like tubes, which might be alarming as they roam over the hull trying to find access points. As with the teleporter on the war machine, craft are supported by gravitic cradles. This allows ships that would not normally be able to land on a planetary surface to use the device.

DEFENCE NEXUS (2)

In addition to the firepower ranged around the sides of the disc, the upper surface has a defence nexus mounting some of the most destructive weapons Tsyamoykyo can imagine. These include an annihilator, an array of disintegrators which can be targeted in a pattern to eliminate parts of an incoming craft with precision, and a temporal dislocation device. In addition he has created a gravitational anomaly inducer, which can cause a tiny black hole to be formed at any point in range.

The hole is unstable and will collapse after about a minute, causing all its absorbed energy to flash back out causing secondary damage. If the hole were to absorb enough matter in this time it might become stable – which would be bad for everything in the pocket universe. That would require forming a hole in an extremely dense block of matter. The weapon is a rather reckless implementation of the technology used to create the larger black hole in the pocket universe.

There is a minimum distance to the disc that these weapons can be targeted, which is just over 1.2 kilometres. Targets below this altitude cannot be directly attacked, although inventive operators might use a weapon in such a way that its secondary effects hit a closer target. The disc's shields will protect against even such danger-close use of the main weapon systems… assuming they are active. The control centre for the defences is present in this structure but can be overridden from the main command complex.

SHIP UNDER CONSTRUCTION (3)

A great ship, perhaps a million displacement tons or more, is under construction in this area. It takes the form of a disc, although little but the main structural members are in place as yet. Construction methods are similar to the war machine at Braudel but on a grander scale. Workers and Technicians perform most tasks by hand, supported by robotic heavy lifters. Work stops at intervals to perform appropriate rituals intended to ensure the ship is spiritually as well as physically fit for purpose. Materials are brought from storage deep in the disc by a one-way teleporter.

PLACE OF ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES (4)

Naturally, an Ancient and his senior servitors cannot be expected to come and go quietly. This area is delineated by twisting half-arches curving inward in a spiral to a central teleporter platform. There are several podia nearby, from where teleporter operators can exercise control and Leaders can coordinate the reception party. There is sufficient space for a few hundred Droyne to watch an arrival or departure, or engage in appropriate rituals of greeting or farewell.

GRAND SPIRE (5)

A grand spire, curving gracefully, extends several kilometres up from an open plaza. It serves no technical purpose, being purely aesthetic, but outsiders might not know that. The spire might be mistaken for an antenna or a weapon of some kind.

PLAZA OF DEFEAT AND SUBJUGATION (6)

This otherwise open area is dominated by a giant statue of Tsyamoykyo, towering above hundreds of life-sized statues. Most are of Droyne, typically in poses of surrender or fatal wounding. Touching or getting close to any of them activates a sense of what happened – or what Tsyamoykyo wished had happened – to the person depicted. Travellers will quickly learn that most were disposed of in unpleasant ways or made abject surrender to become servitors but some have a hated-enemy status whereby Tsyamoykyo depicts what he is going to do to them when he finally triumphs.

The Travellers may find this area overwhelming. The fates of enemies have varied from simple spearing or shooting out of hand to being psionically hurled from a platform into the black hole. It seems that for a time telekinetic smithereening was a favourite of Tsyamoykyo's, before he bored of it and moved on to something more subtle and cruel. The whole area is a monument to his dominance or desire for dominance.

CITY ENTRANCES (7)

Structures rise from the surface of the disc at these points. There may be some logic to their shapes but it is not at all apparent. Domes, geometric shapes and spires create a strange skyline against the blackness of space. Each has entrances to the cities below, which are filled with obedient Droyne working towards Tsyamoykyo's goals.

PLAZA OF PRESENTATION AND INSTRUCTION (8)

A wide plaza allows Tsyamoykyo to stand atop his podium and receive the adulation of his followers. Complex projects are planned by a telepathic conference between senior members of relevant castes and their overlord, and instructions are given by the same method. Completed items and progress reports are also brought before Tsyamoykyo here.

ENCLOSURE OF BIOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTATION (9)

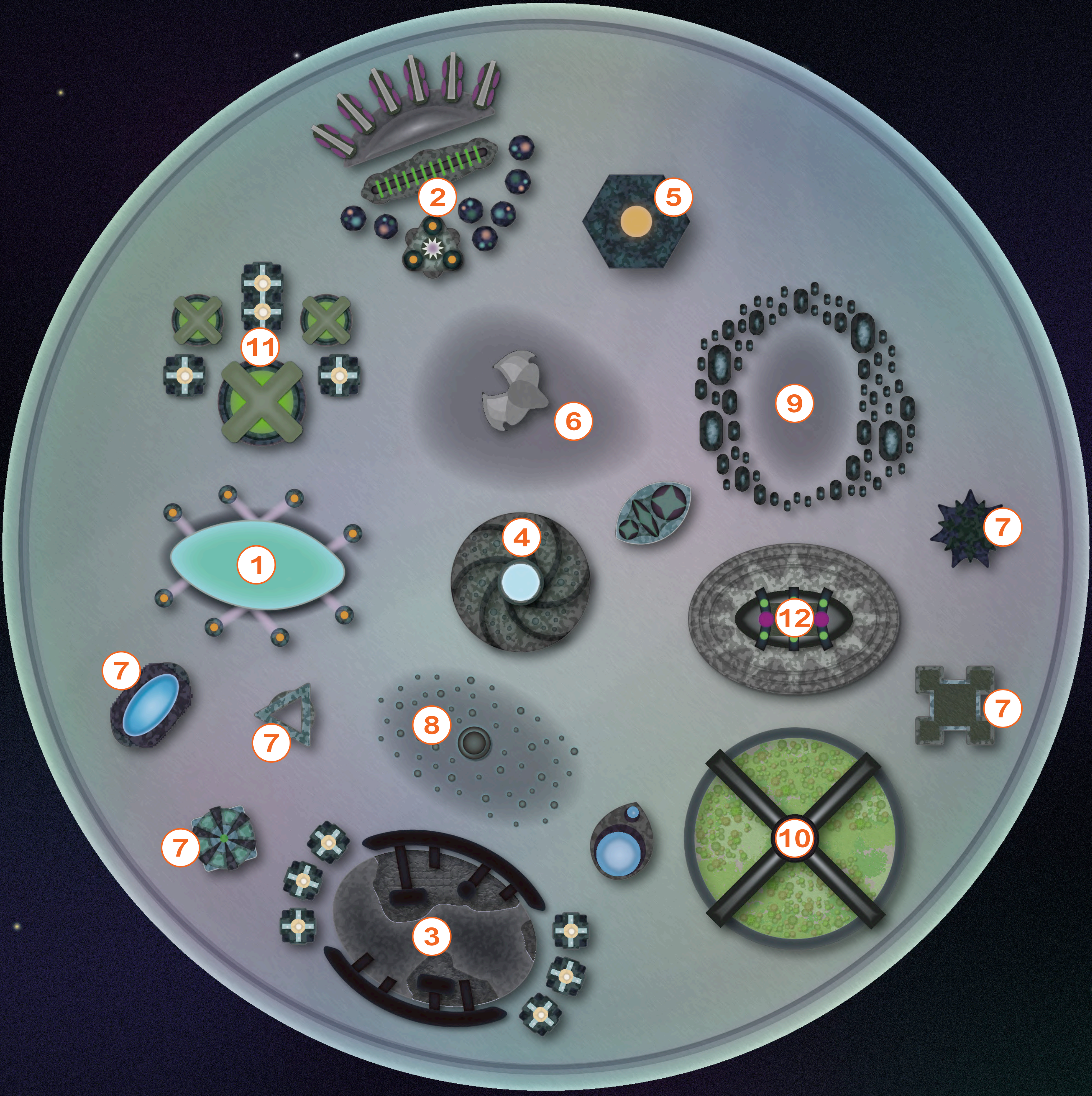
This area includes pens for the results of experiments and a huge ritual plaza for altering large numbers of immature Droyne at once. Most of what is produced here is familiar to the Travellers – G482, boarders, assault masses and the like – but there are also some unique and best-not-repeated experiments underway. Not all of these are on Droyne; Tsyamoykyo alters creatures using other techniques as well. There are huge genetic laboratories under this enclosure containing all manner of questionable projects.

ENCLOSURE OF FUTURE GREATNESS (10)

A large segment of the installation's top surface has been converted to what appears to be an area of pasture and light forest. It is surrounded by high walls topped with forcefield projectors but these are to keep something in rather than preventing entry. Inside the enclosure live the survivors of Yaskoydray's genetic cache. He is studying them in the hope of learning more about his own unique makeup. Someday this may lead to an increase in his talents, or he may decide to enjoy killing the last of the god-gene Droyne just to spite Yaskoydray.

ENCLOSURE OF MECHANISTIC WONDERS (11)

This area is given over to the creation of robots and other 'hard' devices. Within are examples of many projects, not all of them successful, along with showcase areas where Tsyamoykyo can observe his creations. Under the enclosure are several levels of workshops and storage areas where robots ranging from fetch-and-carry drones to tank-sized battle platforms are produced.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COMMAND COMPLEX (12)

Tsyamoykyo's command complex is surrounded by an area of completely open and flat ground. This is not so much about fields of fire as making supplicants walk across this area, feeling small and useless in the face of the tall edifice. Within are his audience and command chambers and a teleporter to his sanctum, located deep within the disc of his fortress.

THE SPACES IN BETWEEN

Some areas of the surface are flat and empty. Others contain a scattering of small buildings mainly used to store equipment and components, or rest and eating areas for personnel working on the surface. Some of the buildings are designed to act as shelters in the event of an experiment gone wrong or some other disaster and are constructed more strongly. Here and there are neatly parked rows of robots and vehicles.

Most of the vehicles are similar to those seen in Twilight's Peak – circular or oval platforms with a handlebar control set. They are inert until activated, which can be done by anyone capable of operating psionically triggered equipment. Manual controls can be used once the vehicle is active. There is nothing resembling a combat vehicle available, just open transports for personnel and equipment.

All over the upper surface are parties of Droyne working at various tasks. They will for the most part ignore non-violent intruders. If something threatening happens there is a chance they will ignore it and continue their work as best they can unless directed otherwise. Response to a more serious threat is to make their way to the nearest city entrance or surface shelter and wait for instructions. It is possible that something might frighten the workers so much they stampede away from the threat, causing mayhem as they go. Once the immediate panic is over they will revert to their default orders of seeking shelter and waiting. The Travellers might enter a building to find dozens of Droyne standing motionless and silent. This might be creepy to those not used to such behaviour.

THE TRAVELLERS ARRIVE

The Travellers will arrive either at the Place of Arrivals and Departures or the Ship Teleporter, depending on how they chose to travel. Arrival is followed by a moment of disorientation, which would leave the Travellers vulnerable if anyone took any notice of them. Their first impression is of spires against the black sky, plasma flares from the black hole and silvery light from the surrounding buildings. Everything is quiet, orderly and strangely peaceful.

Nothing immediately happens and nothing continues to happen so long as the Travellers do not cause trouble. Comings and goings by way of the teleporters are not out of the ordinary and Tsyamoykyo does not monitor them. There are those who do but unless something stands out as strange they are more concerned with ensuring the device is working properly than who used it. The Travellers therefore have a little while to look around. There are no publicly available data terminals or maps of the fortress; those who are supposed to be there know what they need to do their jobs.

If the Travellers act in a hostile or destructive manner, they will get Tsyamoykyo's attention and trigger an immediate response from defence forces nearby. If not, they can wander as they please. Low-level incidents like blundering into a robot testing area and getting chased by a warbot will not trigger a violent response, although once the Travellers start destroying things that will change. Tsyamoykyo will also intervene if the Travellers do something unacceptable like trying to rescue the genetic cache.

From this point on, there are essentially two parallel situations in the fortress, both playing out simultaneously. The 'conventional' side of this is Tsyamoykyo's servitors trying to deal with an incursion using Warriors, robots, creatures and some special weapons if they are available. At the same time, Tsyamoykyo has his own agenda. He will at times order his defensive forces to pull back whilst he tries a different gambit. At first he will want to talk to the Travellers, for reasons of his own, but soon he will become hostile and start trying to destroy them. If they resist his power long enough he will become fearful and desperate.

TSYAMOYKYO'S AGENDA

Greatness is all very well but it is nothing without an audience to appreciate it. Millions of totally subservient, cowed Droyne are worth less than the admiration of one powerful being. This is one of Tsyamoykyo's goals – the Travellers have impressed him and he wants to impress them in return. Expressing admiration for his achievements will please him greatly and for a time at least he will seek the friendship of the Travellers. He would be genuinely happy – perhaps for the first time in his existence – to have to companionship of a group of near-peers. He would be first among not-really-equals, of course, and sooner or later it would all unravel out of fear or jealousy.

Tsyamoykyo is a terribly damaged individual. For all his incredible power he is insecure and frightened of anyone with the capability to defy him. Even if the Travellers were genuinely his friends he would eventually turn on them, just in case they tried to eclipse him, or else he would be angered by a perceived lack of respect. The universe might have been a different place if Tsyamoykyo could experience what the lowliest band of Travellers, scraping a living in a beat-up free trader, take for granted – mutual respect among true friends.

He has perpetrated terrible deeds and it was his choice to do so, although the blame does not lie entirely upon him. He was cloned to be a megalomaniac, then mistreated by those with greater power. They created a monster and inevitably the monster turned on them. However tragic his story may be, Tsyamoykyo is beyond redemption now. Mercy just gives him a chance to regain his power and kindness will be punished. There is nothing 'good' in Tsyamoykyo, just an overwhelming desire to control everything and rub everyone's noses in it.

In the short term, Tsyamoykyo will bask in freely given admiration but sooner or later will revert to his usual plan – control and subjugate everything. He expects to derive a new level of satisfaction from the destruction of such a potent threat – or better yet, from subjugating it. He resents the Travellers for making him feel fear but at the same time that makes their submission so much more valuable to him. In short, the greater the threat posed by the Travellers the more Tsyamoykyo needs to crush them. However, he is willing to resort to his old trick of pretending subservience if that is what it takes. Revenge can come later.

At the same time, Tsyamoykyo wants to understand how the Travellers came to be so powerful. He will eventually want to experiment on them and maybe grind their brains up for analysis, but a lot can be learned from a conversation. Ripping thoughts out of the Travellers' heads comes after that. Thus Tsyamoykyo will start softly in his response to the Travellers' arrival – in part to see what he can learn and in part because he just likes playing with his food.

A CONVERSATION WITH AN ANCIENT

At some point after the Travellers arrive they are approached by a lone Sport. If they blast or otherwise eliminate him others will come. Not immediately perhaps but the Travellers will be approached over and over until they listen to what a Sport has to say. If there is combat going on, enemy forces will pull back and stop shooting, even if this means abandoning a good position.

The Sport is dressed in ceremonial robes but carries no weapons or defensive items. He will not resist or flee if the Travellers decide to harm him but instead keeps repeating the same phrase in Galanglic, Oynprith and possibly other languages, 'I represent the greatness of Tsyamoykyo. I wish to converse.' If the Travellers enter into a conversation with the Sport he will follow them wherever they go, even if fighting starts again. The forces of Tsyamoykyo will try not to hit the Sport but stray shots happen. It is possible that the Travellers will find themselves having a bizarre conversation whilst fighting the defenders of the fortress. If the Sport gets his head blown off during such a fight the Travellers will have to wait for the next one – who may well arrive midsentence.

These Sports do not have names. Their sole purpose is to act as a telepathic proxy for Tsyamoykyo whilst interacting with underlings or anyone else he chooses. He does not explain this when he speaks through them, merely repeating the 'I represent the greatness' line if asked. The Travellers might not figure out straight away that they are talking to the lord of the fortress – or they may actually think he has come unarmed to parlay with them. Ultimately, it will not make much difference so long as the conversation is held.

Tsyamoykyo wants to know who the Travellers are and how they came to be so powerful. He has no reason to doubt their answers and knows about some of the situations the Travellers were involved in, so the truth will be recognised as such. He is also willing to give information – indeed, he is quite eager to tell the Travellers all about his great endeavours. So long as he is gaining information from the Travellers, Tsyamoykyo will allow the conversation to go on. If the Travellers are not forthcoming, he will terminate the interaction. The Sport will try to walk away but if the Travellers kill him Tsyamoykyo will not care.

He wants information on a variety of subjects and will accept vague or partial answers so long as he feels he is being respected. Flippant or blatantly false responses are not respectful. If the Travellers can feed him a trickle of information without angering him they will learn far more than Tsyamoykyo does. The topics that most interest him are:

- Who are the Travellers?
- Who do the Travellers serve?
- How did they come to wield such power?
- Why are they here?
- How did they get here?
- What has happened at Braudel?
- What do the Travellers know about the events at Twilight's Peak?

In return Tsyamoykyo speaks of his works and his plans. He is vague about Ancient times but alludes to the 'fact' that he was the facilitator of great works. When another Ancient could not solve a problem they came to Tsyamoykyo. When they needed a device they could not build, he made it for them. This is true, more or less, but it puts a different slant on the relationship between Tsyamoykyo and his supposed peers. Overall, however, he paints a picture of himself quietly making everything happen whilst the others flailed incompetently around.

When the Final War broke out, naturally everyone wanted Tsyamoykyo on their side. He granted some requests for aid but did not get involved in the bitterest fighting. The others were fools, he says, who squandered their resources – and all the wondrous things Tsyamoykyo had made for them – on killing one another. He stood aloof and eventually retired from Charted Space until stupidity had run its course. When he visited, he was appalled at what he saw.

It was all so senseless. Not the destruction; there was a point to that at least. No, Tsyamoykyo was offended at the lack of purpose. Whole species wasting their time on… whatever it is that mortals do… when they could be working towards something great and lasting. Tsyamoykyo points to his own servitors as an example of what could be. They have purpose and work together towards creating wonders. What more could an insignificant being want than to be part of such a grand endeavour?

Tsyamoykyo intends to give purpose to all peoples of Charted Space and beyond. They will be happy once they have entered his service, knowing that they work towards the greatest of all endeavours. To be part of something greater than themselves is surely all anyone could ask. First, they will assist in their tiny ways with the creation of wonders to outshine the works of Yaskoydray and his idiot offspring. Then Tsyamoykyo will reveal the greatest purpose of all.

As he came to know everything about every subject, Tsyamoykyo began to wonder… WHY? Why is the universe the way it is? He knows all the physical laws that govern everything and he knows how to bend or ignore them; that is not the question. Why are those laws the way they are? Why can he not change them to his own design? There can be only one answer – there are beings governing the cosmos. Others might call them gods.

Tsyamoykyo's final purpose, to which he intends to focus the work of everyone in Charted Space, is to locate the dwelling-place of these gods. He will force entry and stand before the lords of all creation. He will demand answers to the great questions. Why would they make the cosmos so wondrous and yet so vast that even an immortal can never see it all? Why did the gods hide their knowledge and the sight of their wonders from him? Tsyamoykyo intends to make the gods answer his questions… and then he will punish them.

If at all possible, Tsyamoykyo tries to guide the Travellers to the Plaza of Defeat and Subjugation during the conversation. In his ideal outcome the Travellers will be awed and amazed at his plan to bust into heaven and slap the gods about. They will fall to their knees and beg to be a part of this grandest of all designs. He will be offended if they do not and furious if the Travellers make fun of his idea.

The campaign could take a sharp turn here. If the Travellers put on a suitable show of submission and delight at being chosen to take part in Tsyamoykyo's great plan he will welcome them. They will need to stop any attack that is taking place, of course, and bring before him the leaders of the assault. The Travellers can prove their loyalty by punishing the captives, perhaps by kicking them off the disc or hurling them into the black hole. Tsyamoykyo rather likes inflicting that fate on people.

The Travellers will not meet Tsyamoykyo in person for a long time, if ever. They will interact with his Sports and be sent on missions in support of his agenda. The recapture or annihilation of Braudel will be the beginning. So long as their adulation seems genuine, the Travellers will be allowed to serve. However, Tsyamoykyo is a jealous master and doing well is as dangerous as underperforming. At some point he will decide the Travellers are a threat and destroy them. His wrath will be sudden and possibly unexpected. To survive, the Travellers will have to destroy their master. The final battle may play out as it would have had the Travellers refused to serve but other circumstances are entirely possible.

WILD CARDS

The Referee can use Maddox and Mercedes as wild cards during the climax of the campaign. If the Travellers run out of ideas, one of them can provide guidance. Maddox has an overview of the battle – at least until her ship is destroyed – and Mercedes is 'off-camera' as it were. She may have sneaked into a position to see what the Travellers need, or discovered a piece of information that provides a vital clue. As always it is better if the Travellers drive the storyline, even if they go the long way around. If possible the Referee should use these characters sparingly to avoid the Travellers becoming too dependent on being told what to do next, but the option is always there.

GOALS AND TARGETS

The Travellers' ultimate goal is to kill Tsyamoykyo but this is not easily accomplished. He is within his command complex, protected by thick armour and every known type of shield. Starship-grade weapons, even antimatter bombs, will simply bounce off. The Travellers will need to enter Tsyamoykyo's refuge or destroy the entire installation. If the Travellers came alone or their allies have been defeated, they will be hunted by Tsyamoykyo's entire force. If there is fighting going on elsewhere the defenders will be distracted, although the Travellers will still face opposition.

Attempting to enter the command complex directly will not work. There are ways in, however, all using direct teleporter links. In theory, all the Travellers have to do is to reach one of these teleporters and activate it. Actually doing so requires solving some problems, however. Two of the three links are from a command podium – one at the Plaza of Presentation and Instruction and the other at the Plaza of Defeat and Subjugation. The third is inside a giant robot tank.

The Travellers can use any of the teleporters but they will be guarded. Tsyamoykyo is complacent but not stupid – he will station Warriors to defend the route into his sanctum. The Travellers might be stealthy or quick, or might just fight their way through, but whatever they do their first attempt will be thwarted. Ultimately, the way into the sanctum lies inside a mobile armoured fortress.

If the Travellers made good preparations they can use the Advantages they gained whenever they like, so long as they narrate a plausible scene. Advantages are not a win button but can help the Travellers bypass an otherwise impossible situation. The following outline of the assault assumes a full set of allies and the default plan of teleporting *Rustic Idyll* into the fortress with a force of Droyne and Omicron Division personnel aboard. It can be amended as necessary or ignored entirely if the Travellers have a different plan.

HOSTILITIES INITIATED

The Travellers might initiate hostilities or anger Tsyamoykyo, in which case they are on their own for a while. However, the moment *Rustic Idyll* appears on the teleporter pad all hell will break loose. This does not mean the Travellers come under fire immediately. They might continue to converse with Tsyamoykyo's representative whilst watching the assault unfold. Sooner or later they will have to do something, or else the plan will fail.

One moment the ship teleporter pad is empty. The next it is occupied. The arrival of *Rustic Idyll* is followed by a thunderclap and a great outrush of displaced air. Nearby personnel are bowled over or flung about, whilst electrical discharges arc to the nearest projections. The old ship has suffered badly in her descent from orbit and she was already showing her age. There are ragged sections in her hull armour, micrometeorite strike points, and dented and distorted areas dating all the way back to her proud service as a warship of the Imperial Navy. For a few seconds there is stillness, then the carrier begins to rise off the pad. She halts a few tens of metres up.

The silence the broken by the roar of launch tubes as her small craft begin launching. *Rustic Idyll's* guns open fire – starship-grade weapons against personnel targets at point-blank range. Nearby defenders are vapourised before they can bring their weapons to bear. Even buildings are damaged… a little. Winged Droyne Warriors leap from the launch bays, gliding clumsily to the ground. They are unused to air thick enough to fly in and unskilled, but they are willing. Some are shot from the air; others gunned down within instants of reaching the ground. Their sacrifice buys time for some of the small craft to ground; more Warriors and a few humans burst out across the surface of the fortress, weapons blazing. Then the craft are airborne again, veering crazily among the buildings as the defences begin to respond.

The main anti-starship emplacements cannot bear on *Rustic Idyll* but she is already being hammered by smaller weapons. At present she is giving better than she gets but already some of her turrets are out of action and holes are being torn in her hull. The assault has certainly drawn the defenders' attention, however, so the Travellers have a chance to act if they choose to do so. Assault parties have landed all over the fortress

Defender Gambits

Gambit	Notes
Yet More Warriors	The defenders unimaginatively push in another group of Warriors. They may take up a defensive position to block an advance or attempt to outflank the attackers. Alternatively, the Warriors may be escorting a weapon capable of crippling *Rustic Idyll*.
Worker Rush	Assembling a large number of Workers, the defenders rush the Travellers. These Workers are not just shields; they have orders to grab attackers and carry them to the edge of the fortress. There, the Workers will hurl attackers out into space, or jump off carrying them.
Sudden Retreat	The defenders unaccountably start to fall back. This is a ruse; they hope to draw intruders into an ambush. This might just be more Warriors but it is possible this gambit is combined with another, such as getting intruders to chase retreating Warriors into an open space where a monster can attack them more easily.
Monsters!	A few boarders or assault masses have been intermixed with the defensive forces but now a horde of them is unleashed. These creatures are cunning but unintelligent. Their most likely mode of attack is a headlong charge.
Ceasefire	The defenders take cover but stop shooting and begin sending Sports to open negotiations. Their intentions are not honourable; they simply want to buy time to prepare another gambit.
Flying Robots	The defenders send security robots equipped with grav propulsion, attempting to gain an enfilading position. If the situation is not dealt with, the Travellers or their allies might be driven back or forced to find another route.
THE Monster!	The defenders send one of Tsyamoykyo's stranger genetic experiments. The creature is released from the Enclosure of Biological Experimentation.
Send in the Tank	'The Tank' is sent out from the Enclosure of Mechanistic Wonders. This might be a mistake as it contains a teleporter linking directly to the command complex.

surface with orders to cause maximum distraction. The Travellers may be able to assist some of them or obtain support but if they do not take out Tsyamoykyo quickly the scattered attackers will be wiped out.

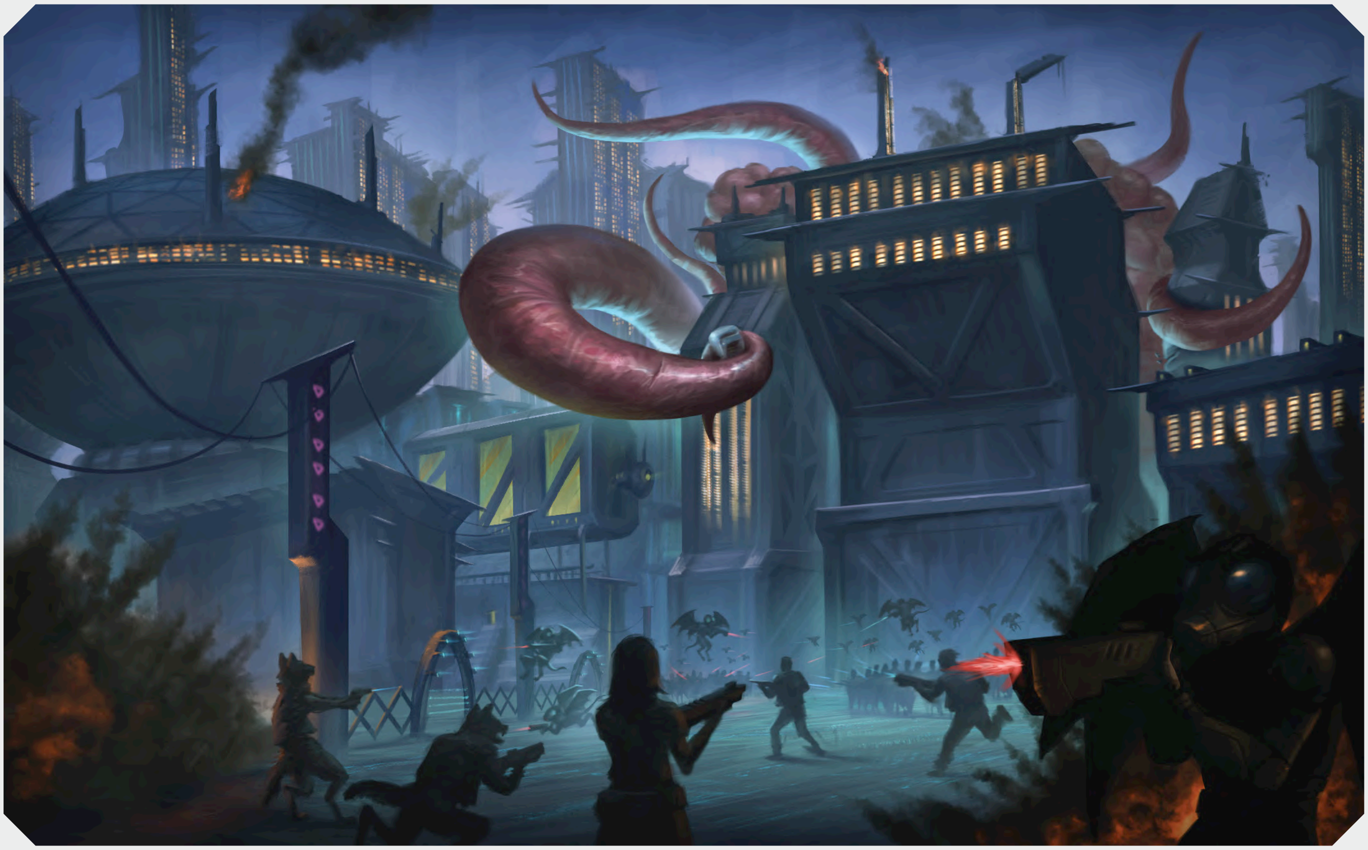
Once the Travellers are declared hostile, or when the attack begins, Tsyamoykyo's servitors will fight back with whatever assets they have at hand. This is typically a mix of Warriors, who are equipped the same as the Intruder Droyne on pages 81 and 82, and combat robots. Reinforcements will be summoned to any threatened area but in a piecemeal fashion. If the Travellers or other intruders do not quickly deal with the threat in front of them – or evade it – the odds will steadily get worse. A serious threat merits a robust response, so after a short period of fighting the defenders will begin feeding additional forces into the fray. These will be G482 creatures, assault masses and boarders.

Once the fighting has begun, attacks by all these assets will come in at intervals. Forces emerge from city entrances or concealed transit tunnels under the surface. These will vary in size and composition, and are not well coordinated. There is no plan for dealing with this situation, since Tsyamoykyo did not believe anyone could find a way in or would even dare try. Besides, his attitude to any potential threat is simply 'it will be crushed' and he expects his servitors to make that happen.

The initial response is just Warriors firing weapons at the intruders but different tactics will be tried if simple firepower and monster assaults do not work. Workers and other non-combatant Droyne will be used as living shields by the Warriors if the intruders have sufficient firepower and sooner or later another use will be found. The tactics on the Defender Gambits table might be directed at the Travellers or their allies. They may be able to intervene, or not. Indeed, the Travellers may have to choose to leave allies to their fate. The whole purpose of the attack is to distract the enemy so the Travellers can defeat Tsyamoykyo. If they become side-tracked, however noble their intentions, everyone loses.

A TIMELINE FOR THE FALL OF TSYAMOYKYO

Events will play out according to what the Travellers try to do but the following timeline should serve as a guide to the general course of events.



THE MONSTER

The monster is similar to the assault masses already encountered but larger and more dangerous. If the Travellers saw the control mass on Vanejen they will recognise this creature as being of the same type but larger and adapted for operations on land. It is huge but not fast, relying on long tentacles to smash enemies into the ground. The creature has a resistance to some weapon types and very thick natural armour. Starship-grade weapons could kill it but that would require a direct line of sight. The monster's handlers are keeping it behind buildings in the hope that the Travellers' ship climbs to obtain line of sight. That would bring it out of the dead zone and allow engagement with ship-killing weapons. It may be that this is how *Rustic Idyll* dies, taking out the monster before being shot out of the sky. If so, parts of the carrier will fall all over the city and some of her crew will survive to join the ground fight.

Animal	Hits	Speed
The Monster	900	3m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 2	
Attacks	Tentacle (20D), Telekinetic Rip (1Dx1D)	
Traits	Armour (+60), Large (+12)	
Behaviour	Violent	

Energy and impaling weapons, including projectiles, do D3 damage per 1D they would normally deliver. Blunt-force weapons do one point per dice. Cutting weapons do normal damage, as do energy weapons.

The Travellers Arrive: The Travellers teleport into the fortress. They may or may not become hostile immediately.
Tsyamoykyo Parlays: Tsyamoykyo's proxies attempt to open a dialogue.
The Assault Begins: *Rustic Idyll* teleports into the fortress and disgorges her assault force.
The Travellers Seek a Way In: The Travellers make their first attempt to get into the command complex.
The Teleporters are Discovered: The Travellers discover or are informed that there are teleporters in the two plazas which access the command complex and there is another somewhere else.
The Monster: The monster is unleashed and begins destroying the assault team. Maddox sacrifices her ship to get a clean shot at it. The monster is killed but the carrier is crippled. It crash lands (or just crashes) on the surface of the disc.
More Fighting: The assault force strives hard but makes little headway.
The Tank: Tsyamoykyo deploys his mobile command post. Once it is crippled the Travellers have another way in.
The Travellers Enter The Command Complex: The Travellers confront Tsyamoykyo.

If the Referee prefers, the Travellers might be able to get straight into the command complex, in which case the battle occurs outside as a backdrop to their final confrontation with Tsyamoykyo. Alternatively they might have to make several attempts to get in. They might reach one of the plaza teleporters just too late, as a dying Technician alters the controls to save his master. In this scenario the Travellers will emerge on the other plaza teleporter, possibly in the middle of a firefight. The teleporters now only connect to one another and the tank is the only way into the command complex.

Ultimately, the Travellers must enter the command complex. Tsyamoykyo actually wants them to do so, although he was planning on demoralising them first by eliminating their allies. If they get in ahead of his schedule by using teleporters he will be momentarily surprised but has planned for what comes next. If the Travellers absolutely cannot figure out how to get in and/or the assault is routed, Tsyamoykyo will unseal the command complex and send a Sport to invite the Travellers to a parlay. He needs to be in close proximity to the Travellers for what he intends to do and under no circumstances will he leave the protection of his command podium whilst there is any threat at all.

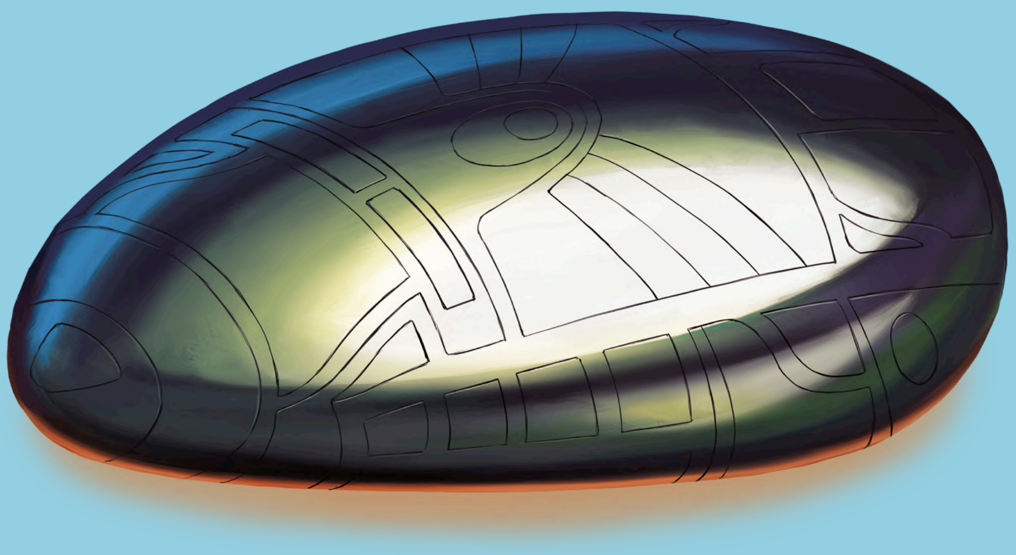
THE TANK

The Tank might better be described as a mobile command installation for Tsyamoykyo. It is grav-mobile, shielded and thickly armoured. Its elegant ovoid exterior has no obvious weapons but it is fitted with a remote-focus temporal dislocation device. Cramming that in left room only for a small command chamber with an elegant railed position where Tsyamoykyo can stand to direct his vehicle. This position is also a teleporter linking to Tsyamoykyo's command complex. He has not used the vehicle yet and would rather like to try it out, but is cautious about going into action in an untested vehicle. Instead, he has sent one of his Sports as a proxy.

Tsyamoykyo wants to observe the battle from the daringly forward position offered by his great tank and to intervene at choice moments. His temporal dislocation device is quite small, doing only 4DD damage, but can fire every 20 seconds or so. He will view the battle through his proxy's telepathic link, firing the temporal dislocation device in vindictive fashion at anyone who looks important or seems to be doing well. He may also crush people with a focused pulse from his gravitic propulsion system. This was not created as a weapon; Tsyamoykyo is just playing around with new and inventive ways of killing people.

The tank is heavily shielded, to the point where it is effectively impervious to known weapons. This one vehicle could rout the entire assault force if Tsyamoykyo stopped being malicious and just tried to win the battle. The vehicle does have weaknesses, however. At the moment the temporal dislocation device fires its shields are disrupted. Enough firepower at that moment would overload them, causing a feedback loop through other systems and disabling the gravitic drive. A hit from a temporal dislocation device would also have the same effect; something Tsyamoykyo has not yet realised.

If the tank is disabled and crashes, the Travellers will be able to gain entry. If they do not do so, perhaps Mercedes or some unnamed hero among the assault force will go in and find the teleporter. In that case the Travellers will be quickly informed there is a way into the command complex and the campaign can proceed to its finale. No details are provided for the tank – it is an Ancients artefact and a puzzle to solve, not a simple vehicle or robot. The Travellers must overcome it by some clever stratagem. In addition to a temporal dislocation device or mass firepower options, it may be possible to cripple the vehicle by luring it over a mass of antimatter bombs or some equally grandiose piece of destructive ingenuity. The Referee should reward desperately inventive Travellers.



CONFRONTATION

The Travellers teleport into Tsyamoykyo's command chambers. He is present, with a small entourage of Droyne. He wears the most incredible set of robes ever fashioned and stands on a command podium of breath-taking beauty. More importantly, it is shielded against pretty much everything. A force of Warriors stand between him and the Travellers, weapons held in salute rather than threat. If the Travellers immediately open fire there will be an exchange and people will die, but if not there is a moment of quiet in which a Sport – not Tsyamoykyo himself – offers ritual greetings and apparently genuine respect.

ENTRY TELEPORTER (1)

The entry teleporter arrives at one focus of the oval chamber. Anyone arriving will be instantly struck by the splendour of the chambers.

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS (2)

Large banks of control systems line the walls, with Technicians standing by or operating them.

PHALANX OF WARRIORS (3)

A tight block of Warriors faces the entry teleporter. A lone Sport stands in front of them, motionless. A few seconds after the Travellers appear this Sport begins a ritual greeting and will attempt to continue even if the Travellers are shooting him.

SPORTS AND DRONES (4)

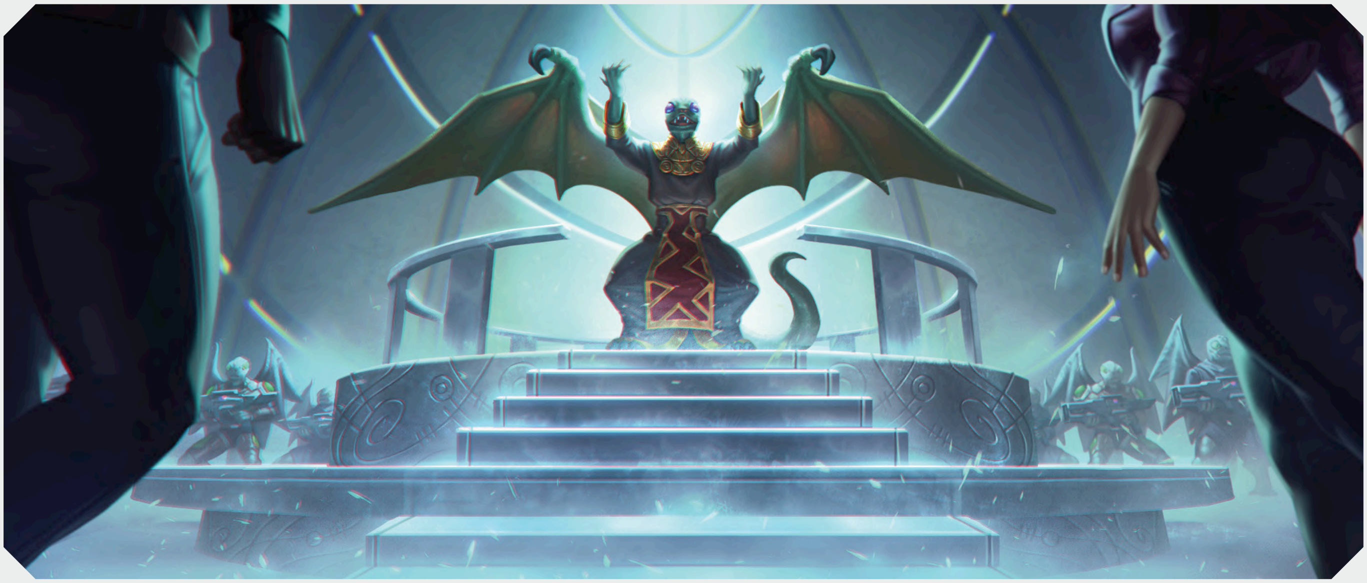
A small entourage of Sports and Drones stand around the command podium awaiting instructions from their master. They will not take part in any fighting other than to get in the Travellers' way.

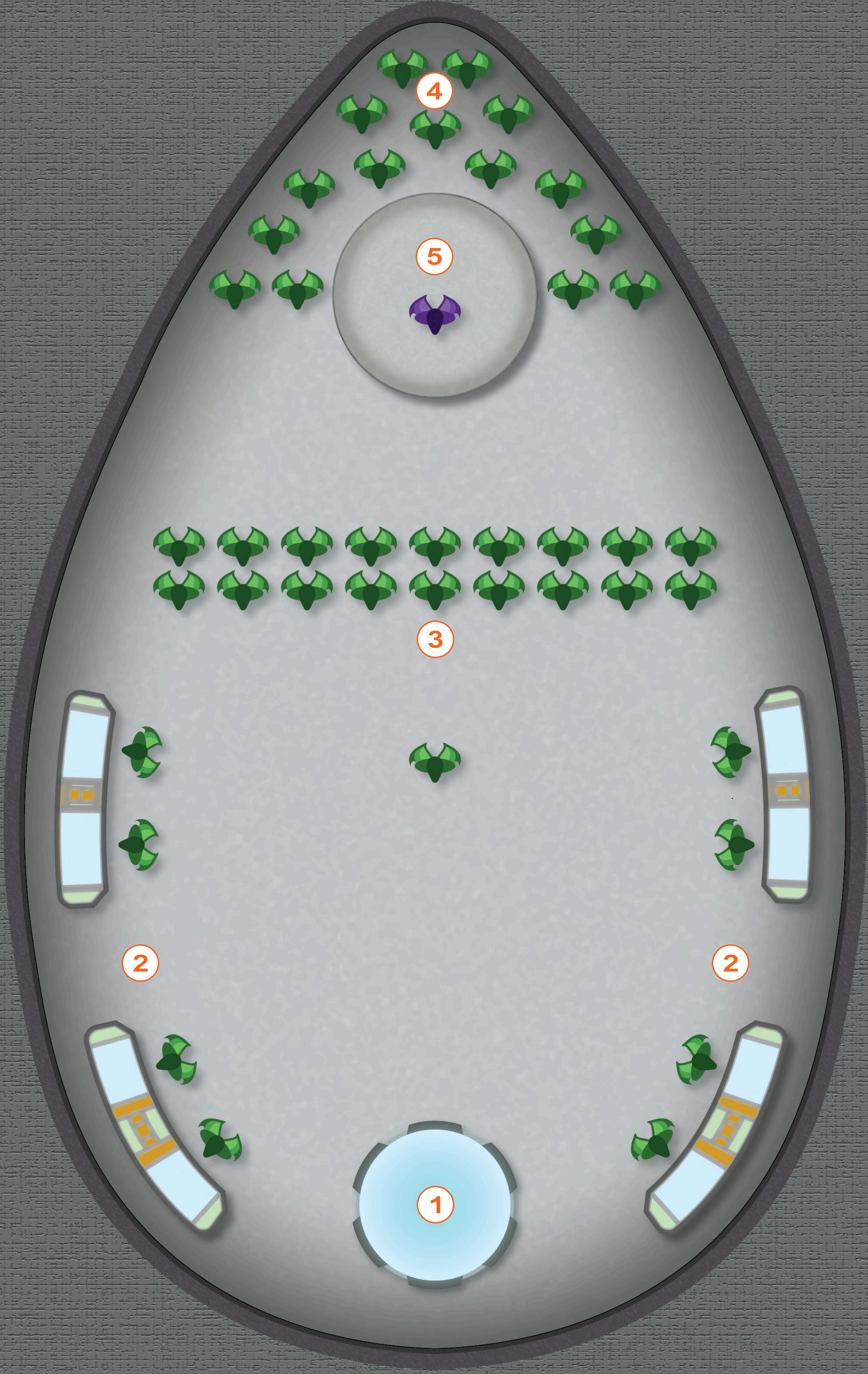
THE COMMAND PODIUM (5)

Tsyamoykyo stands atop this podium, ready to receive the obeisance of the Travellers. He will not leave its protection other than to teleport away to safety.

There are displays around the walls, showing the fighting outside and something even more worrying. The installation is moving, leaving its orbit and accelerating towards the black hole. Its course is a direct intercept. Tsyamoykyo speaks in person for the first time, saying in Galanglic 'We could stop'. He is referring to the fighting outside as much as the motion of his fortress.

Tsyamoykyo is a megalomaniac but one with a great deal of fear in his heart. He has a plan to co-opt the Travellers and triumph over them but also has an escape route if things go awry. His planned outcome is to make the Travellers his willing slaves by means of a psionic dream – he has no idea they have experience of such things – and if that fails his Warriors will kill

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them. If, somehow, all that goes wrong he will teleport to his archive and leave the Travellers to fall into the black hole. He is willing to destroy all that he has built in order to eliminate a foe powerful enough to enter his sanctum. This is his final failsafe, one that will destroy the entire pocket universe and everything in it.

THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS

Tsyamoykyo indicates that he is willing to give the Travellers the chance to join him. They have demonstrated their worth, he says, and are fit to become part of this great endeavour. All the Travellers have to do is pledge allegiance and allow Tsyamoykyo to make some minor adjustments to their psyche. He is referring to his obedience-conditioning of course but thinks the Travellers might not know what they are agreeing to. He offers them great rewards, starting with the choice of who – out of the assault force survivors – will be spared. He is willing to agree terms such as creating a free enclave where friends and family of the Travellers can live in peace, or granting rulership over the Third Imperium. He has no intention of honouring any deal he makes; once the Travellers are obedience-conditioned there will be no reason to give them anything but instructions.

Whether or not the Travellers agree, Tsyamoykyo plunges them into a psionic nightmare. His powers are enhanced in his sanctum and he is able to ram the trigger through whatever psionic shielding the Travellers might have. He very quickly comes to regret that; he was expecting to enter the minds of a bunch of terrified mortals, quite possibly with consent, and to alter their thinking to suit his wishes. Instead, he has entangled himself with some very powerful minds indeed.

The Travellers find themselves in a featureless universe of dark grey, tiny figures on an endless plain. Towering over them is Tsyamoykyo in a posture of triumph. Their submission is assumed… then demanded. Tsyamoykyo's fury at any defiance fills the whole of this imaginary universe. If the Travellers submit, he will begin conditioning them to obedience and the campaign is essentially over. If they resist, they will have to fight Tsyamoykyo in his own mind. Ironically perhaps, he has placed the Travellers where they can destroy him. All his shields are useless here and he cannot operate the teleporter in his podium.

TSYAMOYKYO'S ARCHIVE

Like many of the Ancients, Tsyamoykyo achieved immortality by regularly replacing his cloned body and downloading his memories into it. He has mechanisms for doing this in his command complex but the main facility is aboard a starship at the fringe of the pocket universe. This is his archive, a repository of all his knowledge and memories. If it is destroyed, Tsyamoykyo is truly gone from the universe.

Tsyamoykyo's escape ship is virtually undetectable. It moves around, following the entry point as the influence of the black hole distorts the pocket cosmos. The immense energies flaring from the black hole mask any emissions the ship may have and its location is only predictable to someone who knows how to predict the distortion of the pocket universe. Tsyamoykyo is the only being outside the vessel who even knows it exists. The Droyne crew are replaced regularly and never leave the ship alive.

In the event of some worst-case disaster, Tsyamoykyo will hurl his fortress into the black hole, teleport to his ship and leave the pocket universe by way of its entry/anchor point. It will collapse at that point, dooming anything that has not already been swallowed by the black hole. After this piece of cosmic-level overkill, Tsyamoykyo will be back in the normal universe with only his crew and the resources of one ship. He does have caches hidden here and there however, and given enough centuries will be able to rebuild his power. He was getting bored with that pocket universe, anyhow…

No game rules are given for Tsyamoykyo. It would be impossible to create a meaningful set for an Ancient and equally difficult to match them to the Travellers' capabilities as those can vary hugely by this point. Not that it matters; this is about the Travellers, not their enemy. Their actions and responses to what Tsyamoykyo tries to do will determine the outcome of the campaign and perhaps the fate of Charted Space.

What happens next takes place over just a few seconds in the real world but events may seem lengthy in the dream-state. At the beginning of the nightmare nobody can move or control their body in a useful manner, nor can they give orders or operate controls – even psionically. The Travellers may be able to change that. In the meantime they can see Tsyamoykyo's intentions. He plans to control them and force obedience, and will not honour any agreements. The Travellers must triumph or be lost forever.

The assault begins with a raw wave of compulsion, a demand to surrender and submit that goes beyond words. It is as if the Travellers are hungry and thirsty for submission; as if surrender was air and they are suffocating. All Travellers must make a Difficult (10+) PSI check with their Interpret as a DM. So long as the Travellers do not submit to Tsyamoykyo's will they are not subjugated no matter what the outcome of this check. However, those that pass learn a great deal about him. This translates to the Traveller asking one question of the Referee per point of Effect. This might be something simple(ish) and practical such as the location of his archive or the layout of the fortress. Deeper and more complex questions may be answered in a general-overview manner or some possibly not very relevant detail may be emphasised. Those that pass the check will also sense Tsyamoykyo's growing horror as he realises he is trapped in his own nightmare with dangerous minds.

From this point on the Travellers are in a collective nightmare. The Effect of their PSI checks will be tracked as per page 34. They will decide what version of events they wish to believe and whether they force this upon Tsyamoykyo. When acting in concert the Travellers may use the highest PSI score among them and the highest Interpret even if these are possessed by different Travellers. A Traveller acting alone uses their own PSI and Interpret level. That will not happen during the dream but immediately afterward a Traveller might use a dream of their own against Tsyamoykyo's servitors.

In addition to the cumulative Effect of the checks, the Travellers may also gain Victories. These represent direct hits on Tsyamoykyo's confidence and ego. The Referee should keep track of how many the Travellers have. They will be used at the end of the dream.

INCIDENT 1: YASKOYDRAY'S CONCLAVE

Tsyamoykyo attempts to dominate the Travellers by showing how important he was to the course of history. He begins on Andor, 300,000 years ago. Yaskoydray has summoned his offspring, demanding they join him in a great project. He stands on a grassy field, a great city behind him, and waits. Tsyamoykyo is there, watching. Time passes. No-one comes. Yaskoydray bows his head in despair and Tsyamoykyo goes to comfort him. He will bring them, he says. He will find them and drag them from their pocket universes and force them to comply. Yaskoydray indicates his gratitude and Tsyamoykyo teleports to his fleet, waiting in orbit. A grand telepathic choir of Drones welcomes him aboard and he ascends to his command podium…

The Travellers can sense this is nothing like what really happened but it is the version Tsyamoykyo's ego demands. If they simply accept this version of events, the Travellers must designate one of their number to roll 1D. This is treated as the negative Effect of the PSI check. For example, if the Travellers accept the situation and roll 5, they now have a cumulative Effect -5, translating to an outcome of Frightening if the dream were to end here. It will not, however.

If the Travellers oppose Tsyamoykyo's version of events, they may make a Difficult (10+) PSI check, using their Interpret level as a DM, as normal when changing a narrative. They can designate whichever of them they like to make the roll, using the highest PSI and Interpret within the group, providing that Traveller agrees. This check is subject to some additional DMs. If the situation narrated by the Travellers is close to what really happened, they should be awarded DM+2. A plausible-ish story has no modifiers and an unlikely one is subject to DM-2.

Historically, Yaskoydray would not have been standing in a field. He would have been in his command chambers or perhaps a laboratory. Some of his offspring did come when he called them and Tsyamoykyo did not comfort a distraught Yaskoydray – he was ordered to go and get his siblings like a common servitor. If the Travellers include submission or subservience by Tsyamoykyo in their version of events they are awarded a Victory. A wildly unlikely version of events in which Tsyamoykyo is humiliated still yields a Victory.

INCIDENT 2: THE SUBJUGATION OF HUMANITI

The Travellers are standing atop a great tower on the edge of an advanced city. The ground is far below but they can clearly see people working. They are humans, overseen by Droyne. The humans are required to grovel every time a Droyne, however lowly, approaches. Years pass quickly. Some of the humans choose to rebel and are crushed by Warriors led by Tsyamoykyo. The rebels are driven from cities to live a primitive life in the wilderness and those who submit are taken to the stars. The city stands empty for millennia, whilst the primitives grub about in the mud below. Then the ice advances, burying the city and eradicating all sign of it. The primitive humans wander south ahead of the ice. Perhaps they will survive the ice age, perhaps not. Those that chose to submit live a glorious life among the stars and help build wonders.

If this assertion goes unchallenged the Travellers are accepting a history in which humans fully submitted to the Ancients. If some of the Travellers are alien, the humans are symbolic of their species, too. Accepting this version imposes -1D on the cumulative Effect. If the Travellers challenge it, they may make a Difficult (10+) PSI check to impose their narrative. DMs apply as before depending on the plausibility of the Travellers' story.

Historically, what is depicted is not all that far from the truth, except that Tsyamoykyo was not involved in the subjugation of Humaniti. If the Travellers present a version of events where at least some of the humans retain a measure of independence they can challenge Tsyamoykyo's vision of dominance. Possibilities include a version where the surviving humans return to the lands uncovered by retreating ice and develop to the point where they are building cities of their own, or where a rebellion is successful. A storyline that races through human history (or the history of a Traveller's species if different) and culminates in a member of that species busting into the sanctum of Tsyamoykyo will shock him deeply and grant the Travellers a Victory.

INCIDENT 3: THE FINAL WAR

The Final War is raging. Worlds are burning. The massed fleets of Yaskoydray meet those of a powerful faction among his offspring… and are defeated. Yaskoydray despairs. He begins preparing for Krinaytsyu; ritual suicide. Tsyamoykyo stops him, bolstering his spirit with a few choice words and images. Then he unveils his masterstroke; a new fleet built in secret. In seconds it tears apart the forces of his siblings and they are soon brought before him.

Yaskoydray showers thanks and praise upon his favourite child, and suggests Tsyamoykyo be the one to pass judgement over the rebels. He decrees they be stripped of their psionic powers and forced to serve Yaskoydray – they are not worthy to serve Tsyamoykyo! Yaskoydray joyfully accepts their service and sends them to perform humiliating tasks. Tsyamoykyo then activates his secret weapons, collapsing pocket universes and turning equipment against his siblings. The Final War is won.

The Travellers could accept this outrageous lie. If they challenge it, they will need to demonstrate a different set of events. Historically, Yaskoydray narrowly defeated his offspring and destroyed most of them. He did make use of Tsyamoykyo's weapons but they were deployed at his behest rather than him being rescued from certain defeat. If the Travellers choose to depict Tsyamoykyo's real involvement in the Final War – scurrying around and grabbing what he could from battlefields, then running off to hide – they will humiliate him and score a Victory.

INCIDENT 4: THE SUBMISSION OF YASKOYDRAY

Millennia have passed and the Final War has become a sordid affair of knives and poison, fought through proxies and agents who do not even know who they serve. An Ancient known only as Seven has achieved near-dominance. Yaskoydray faces final defeat. Tsyamoykyo has moved beyond and above such things, and is busy with his important projects. Yaskoydray comes to his fortress and begs for help, and Tsyamoykyo naturally grants his wish. He storms triumphantly into Seven's stronghold and kills him. Upon his return, Tsyamoykyo receives the submission of Yaskoydray and takes his place as the rightful lord of the surviving Ancients.

There might be a slight element of truth to this one, depending on how *Secrets of the Ancients* ended. If Seven emerged victorious and the Travellers agreed to serve him, his sudden silence is now finally explained. Tsyamoykyo killed Seven, although it was not in heroic fashion. Instead, he triggered the collapse of Seven's pocket universe using a device built into it millennia ago. He did not receive the submission of Yaskoydray.

The Travellers could alter the narrative to some other situation in which Tsyamoykyo did not emerge triumphant, which can be handled the same way as the other incidents. However, if they choose to replay their memories of the battle with Seven they receive DM+6 on the PSI check. Tsyamoykyo's horror and fear are palpable as he finally realises what he is up against. These Travellers have already cast down an Ancient! As he realises he is not seeing a chosen narrative but actual memories, his will collapses. The Travellers can end the dream immediately. If the Travellers chose some other narrative, they may still make their PSI check. Either way, the cumulative Effect of these checks will determine the outcome of the dream-battle.

13+ COMPLETE DOMINANCE

Tsyamoykyo's will is broken. He collapses in terror and begs for mercy. He will take no action, including giving orders or attempting to teleport away. This state lasts for 2D days during which he will pathetically obey commands from any Traveller. He cannot even conceive of trying to oppose them during this time. After the state of mental collapse passes Tsyamoykyo begins to regain his rage and desire for dominance. He will pretend to comply until he sees a chance to escape.

6+ DOMINANCE

Tsyamoykyo is cowed and frozen in panic. For the next 2D hours he will do little more than babble incoherently and make weird demands. He will do as he is told during this time and will not try to escape. The state of submission passes after this and he will begin to plot against his captors.

1–5 PARTIAL DOMINANCE

Tsyamoykyo is terrified of the Travellers. He cannot act coherently for the next 2D minutes.

0 OR LESS: NO DOMINANCE

Everyone emerges from the nightmare confused and disorientated but able to act immediately. Tsyamoykyo's minions attack the Travellers and he prepares to escape if they fail.

NEMESIS INCARNATE

As the dream ends, Tsyamoykyo may or may not be able to act. If the Travellers achieved dominance in the dream-battle he is unable to give orders or activate his teleporter but his minions have been briefed with a final plan to save him. If he is able to act, he will wait to see how the fight in the control room turns out. His shields are still up so he is safe enough and he is one flick of the mind from teleporting safely away.

Either way, the Warriors attack the Travellers whilst the Drones and Sports of the entourage try to help their master. Technicians around the walls of the chamber lunge for their controls. One of them has a special task – to teleport Tsyamoykyo away in the event he cannot do it himself. The Travellers have at most a few seconds to prevent his escape. What happens in those seconds will determine the course of future history.

The Travellers have been inside Tsyamoykyo's mind, which also gives them some contact with the Droyne servitors in the command chamber. If the Travellers won any Victories during the dream they may now use them to gain an advantage. Each Victory allows the Travellers to implant a command in any one of the servitors. This may be an imperative not to use a set of controls such as the ones set up to teleport Tsyamoykyo away, or some other action the Travellers may find useful. They may even order Tsyamoykyo to turn off his shields, or have one of his attendant Drones do it instead of assisting him. The imperative lasts only a few seconds, after which the target may act normally.

The Travellers need to prevent Tsyamoykyo from teleporting and eliminate his Warriors – or they could make him order them to stand down if they have broken his will. A straight exchange of plasma in the command chamber is one possible outcome here but clever Travellers may solve the problem in other ways.

TECHNICIANS

There are 10 Technicians in their end of the chamber. One is at the teleporter controls and must be stopped immediately. If the Travellers think of it, any of them can make an Average (8+) Interpret check to know which one is the designated teleporter operator, pulling this information from Tsyamoykyo's own memories. A Victory could be used to implant a command in this Technician, to temporarily disable the teleporter. A well-placed shot will also prevent the use of the controls, although other Technicians will try to take his place.

WARRIORS

The Warriors will level their weapons at the Travellers but might not shoot immediately. If Tsyamoykyo's will is broken he can be made to order their surrender. If not, they will start shooting when the Travellers do something hostile. The Warriors will keep fighting until they are all killed or ordered to stop.

DRONES AND SPORTS

The Drones and Sports will rush to aid their master if he seems to be distressed. An implanted command could make one of them disable the teleporter or lower Tsyamoykyo's shields. If they are not stopped, the Drones and Sports will clamber up onto the podium to assist Tsyamoykyo. They will hesitate to operate the teleporter as his personal controls are off-limits but loyalty will win out over obedience. Sooner or later someone will activate the teleporter for their master unless they are prevented.

TSYAMOYKYO

Rattled as he is, if Tsyamoykyo is capable of acting coherently he will watch the battle in the hope of seeing his foes gunned down and will not permit his Technicians to teleport him away. If things are going badly he will seek escape but the Travellers will sense his intent to teleport. A Victory can be used to make him hesitate for a few moments or even turn off his own shields. These do not fail instantly. They will go down over a minute or two, after which he is vulnerable. Pouring firepower into the failing shields, along with an inability to escape, will cause Tsyamoykyo to panic and enter a subjugated state. How long this will last is an open question but it may be enough to strip him of his defences and retrain him.

ENDGAME

All else aside, the fortress is accelerating directly at a black hole. It can be put into a frighteningly close orbit and moves away again if the Travellers get control of the complex – or if they can order the Technicians to alter course. A Victory would allow that. Alternatively, they will have to figure out the controls and do it themselves. This is not impossible – they have been in the mind of the being who created the fortress and may be able to dig through fragmented images to find the information they need.

If Tsyamoykyo teleports out, he will escape. He has limited resources but there is a chance for him to rebuild his strength over the centuries. He will come back nastier and more determined than ever… someday. More immediately, his pocket universe begins collapsing as soon as he leaves it. The Travellers will have to find a way to escape but they have a few days before total collapse. The ship teleporter is one option, perhaps using the wreckage of *Rustic Idyll* to guide its field. There are also Ancients ships hidden deep in the fortress. The Travellers would find themselves in deep space, very far from home. Who knows what adventures they might find on the voyage back to Charted Space?

If Tsyamoykyo is killed, the Travellers have won. They might want to get rid of his archive, perhaps by dropping it in the black hole. In the shorter term his forces will continue to fight unless ordered to stop. The key to this is once again the fragmented memories the Travellers saw during the dream confrontation. The entire population of the fortress is now leaderless, so if they can be ordered to stop fighting they will go back to routine maintenance tasks and allow themselves to be disarmed. In the longer term, the Travellers will need to figure out what to do with all these Droyne. They are conditioned to total obedience towards a master who is no more. This will be traumatic, to say the least.

Tsyamoykyo may be dead at this point. If he was subjugated, the Travellers now have to decide what to do with him. In some ways they have already put him on trial; they know his psyche from the contact they had. One thing is certain: Tsyamoykyo will always be a threat. He is driven to scheme and seek dominance, and as soon as he regains his wits he will begin plotting against the Travellers. What, then, to do with him?

Cold-blooded execution is an option. The Travellers might expect opposition from Maddox, Mercedes or others but no-one can see any better options. A fusion-gun firing squad is an option, as is hurling Tsyamoykyo off the fortress into the black hole, as he liked to do to others. Using a temporal dislocation device is pretty vindictive – but thorough. Imprisonment poses a problem. How to contain a being so powerful? There is a way, if the Travellers find it; Tsyamoykyo created a decoy pocket universe which still exists. It could serve as a prison, although there is always a chance someone may stumble in or Tsyamoykyo might find a way out.

The Travellers have won but with that victory comes a new set of questions; what now? Once the immediate problems of dealing with Tsyamoykyo and avoiding death by gravitational spaghettification in the black hole, the Travellers can take stock and start thinking about the future. Their decisions will have implications for everyone.

AFTERMATH

Tsyamoykyo's fortress will be somewhat the worse for wear by the time the Travellers are finished with it, if it still exists at all. Destruction of the fortress would mean the loss of all the stored knowledge and stockpiled materials, as well as the existing machinery. The Travellers might consider that a fair price for thwarting Tsyamoykyo's plans.

If anything of the fortress survives, the Travellers are now in possession of an Ancient's workshop. Exactly what this means must be determined by the Referee. In other words, the Referee must decide how much power is placed in the hands of the Travellers and may decide this is best kept rather limited. However, the default option for this campaign is: *all the power*. That is, the fortress can be an enabler for anything the Travellers choose to do next – providing they make a good story out of it. It is suggested that the Referee treat the resources of the fortress as a source of adventures rather than a stocklist of exactly how many plodgewidgets are stored in aisle 2298221b.

GAINING CONTROL

In order to make use of the fortress the Travellers will need to first gain full control of it. This will require removing Tsyamoykyo's lockouts and transferring systems to their own identities. Decryption and reprogramming is not an option; the systems are psionically keyed and must be de-attuned before being transferred to a new operator. This can be accomplished by psionic dream forays and battling anti-tamper mechanisms and automated systems never designed to interface with anyone but Tsyamoykyo.

The Travellers may face opposition from the Oytrip of Vaykouh and/or Omicron Division. The Oytrip fears that the Travellers may decide to take control over them in the way Tsyamoykyo did and does not want the fortress in the hands of an oppressor. Its leaders would very much like to be given the fortress and can make a strong case for wise custodianship. If the Travellers were to agree to this, they would be considered friends to the Oytrip, to be honoured appropriately. That translates to being given whatever they ask or can show a need for from the fortress' stocks and projects. In this way, the Travellers get access to great resources without having to micromanage their base and the Oytrip is resistant to demands or takeover attempts.

This is an amicable arrangement which would be honoured by the Droyne. They really just want to be left alone and Tsyamoykyo's fortress is an excellent place to be left alone in. They fear what the Travellers may become but consider that cooperation allows them to potentially guide their development and capabilities. The Oytrip would never break their deal but if the Travellers are abusive or try to act as dictators they would sever contact and fight if necessary.

There is another implication of this arrangement. The Oytrip really does just want to be left alone but might become proactive in making this happen – returning to its mission of watching for signs of the Ancients and hunting their agents down. In time, the Oytrip might decide that assisting other Droyne is a way of 'hardening' Charted Space against a resurgence of the Ancients or other oppressors. Where this might lead is a matter for conjecture.

If the Oytrip cannot have the fortress, they advocate its destruction. It represents too much power for the owners and will inevitably be a focus for violence. Whether someone tries to take it or the owners start misusing their powers, nothing good can come of the fortress in anyone's hands but the Oytrip of Vaykouh. The Droyne genuinely believe this and cannot be persuaded with mere words or telepathic images of good intentions. Centuries of demonstrable practice might suffice but that is beyond the here and now.

A compromise of sorts is possible. The Oytrip will agree to leave the fortress intact and in the hands of the Travellers in return for sufficient repaired starships and equipment to relocate its entire population. If the Travellers agree, the Oytrip will make preparations to leave Charted Space. They may seek a new home far away or perhaps voyage forever as interstellar nomads but their intention is simple – they want to place themselves beyond the reach of oppressors whether those be former enemies or friends.

If no agreement can be reached the Droyne are alarmed and frightened – to their eyes the Travellers are already turning into their former foes. They will state so but will not become violent. They ask only to return to their homes. In the short term they will try to scavenge systems from the war machine to protect themselves and as soon as they can will build new starships to leave Charted Space. They will not oppose the Travellers but no help will be given.

This means that whatever happens, within a few years there will be no Droyne on Braudel. Ruins will be scavenged and sealed over with appropriate ceremony for the many dead; everything useful will be repurposed or packed for the new home. What is left will be destroyed when the Droyne leave. This is not the first ravaged homeworld they have abandoned and perhaps they will be luckier elsewhere. It is possible these new nomads of the cosmos might take friends with them – humans from Braudel or people picked up along the way. Their adventures and eventual fate are beyond the scope of this campaign.

Omicron Division has a slightly different stance. It exists to deal with threats like Tsyamoykyo and gain control of assets and technologies useful against them. The obvious necessity is to place the fortress in the hands of the Emperor and his representatives. The Omicron Division contingent has several Imperial Warrants authorising them to seize an asset like this one and requiring all Imperial citizens to assist. Refusing this imperative is to defy the Emperor and become an outlawed enemy of the state. The Travellers might find this mildly worrying or utterly hilarious but there are some important considerations here. If any of the Omicron Division people get home, the Imperium will come looking for the fortress and the Travellers' own identities will be on the most wanted list forever.

There is little immediate threat, however. The physical anchor point to the 'real' universe is unknown and entry is more or less impossible anyway. The only option is the ship teleporter at Braudel, which at the moment is also the Travellers' only way in and out of the pocket universe. If the Travellers move or destroy it, the Imperium has no way of reaching the fortress, so the only threat to the Travellers is if they operate in Imperial space and are recognised.

The Omicron contingent would settle for total destruction of the fortress or pocket universe and are smart enough to need proof of this. It might be possible to strike a bargain whereby the Travellers supply a quantity of artefacts and machinery in return for being left in temporary control of the fortress. This is a risky strategy on the part of Omicron Division but it may be the best they can get – the option is always there for a future takeover attempt. Violence is possible but the Omicron personnel owe a lot to the Travellers and they have cooperated against a common foe.

On balance, this might be a situation where treading carefully is the best option. One thing is certain however; the Imperium will never accept an installation like this existing outside its control. Some attempt will be made to capture, destroy, buy, steal or otherwise disable the fortress. It will be made by decent, dedicated people who think they are acting for the best. They may even be right but all the same they will be acting against the Travellers. Choices must be made.

There is another group to be considered – the Droyne of Tsyamoykyo's universe. Some will simply stop what they are doing and die when their master is taken away, and overall their orderly society is thrown into a shambles. They need leadership, or more accurately they need someone to serve. These people have known nothing but tyranny for millennia. Kindness is always just a cruel game; hope is kindled only to make crushing it more sweet.

In the short term, the Droyne of the fortress can be invaluable in getting it working again. The Travellers might decide to keep the status quo – the Droyne certainly are useful servitors! Rehabilitating them will be a long and difficult process and one they will unintentionally resist. It is not that these people want to be tyrannised but they know nothing else. Acting as anything but a cruel god will confuse and frighten them. A different sort of fright perhaps but fear nonetheless.

What the Travellers do with the Droyne is entirely up to them and their choice will say a lot about their character. Expedience is easy, whereas helping the Droyne learn how to govern themselves and live meaningful lives will be a long and frustrating task. The Travellers might try some interesting justifications for what they do – perhaps it is for the greater good that the fortress remain staffed by totally loyal neo-slaves, or perhaps what the Travellers make them do is a meaningful existence after all. They are part of a grand endeavour now; something greater than themselves. Perhaps they should be grateful for the opportunity.

There are some difficult moral decisions to be made here and the Travellers are free to make them any way they please. The easy solutions are oppression and tyranny, or the Travellers could just kill everyone. That is what the Ancients would do, after all! Assuming this is not an attractive option, the choice is ultimately between destroying the installation, sealing it away, taking control and dealing with all the complications, or putting someone else in charge.

As already noted, Omicron Division and the Oytrip of Vaykouh are both keen to control the fortress but there are potential problems either way. Mercedes and/or Maddox, if either or both survived, would also be willing. They, and the crew of *Rustic Idyll*, are long out of their time and have already witnessed wonders and horrors. They could make a home here and find new purpose. Leading the tyrannised Droyne out of their world of misery will be a long task but a worthy one and there will be time to foray out of the pocket universe once in a while. If the Travellers go down this road they will be leaving the fortress in the hands of trustworthy friends and fulfilling the destiny that began at Twilight's Peak.

MAKING AN EXIT

When the Travellers first gain control over the fortress there is only one way in and out available to them; the ship teleporter back to Braudel. This was not Tsyamoykyo's only route, however. He possessed the knowledge and specialist computers necessary to predict the location of the entry/exit point from his pocket universe. This was one of his most closely guarded secrets, since without it his fortress is almost entirely inaccessible. Equipped with this information the Travellers can enter and exit the pocket universe at its anchor point in the 'real' universe.

The anchor point is very far from Charted Space. Tsyamoykyo chose his location well, making sure it would never be found by accident. He even created a decoy fortress much closer to inhabited space and came to this one by way of a teleporter link between the two. The decoy universe may still exist, waiting to be reoccupied at need or used as a death-trap if some powerful foe followed him to what seemed to be his refuge. The Travellers may be able to find this second fortress, but there is not much of use there.

TSYAMOYKYO'S OTHER UNIVERSE

The decoy pocket universe is small and dark, with no sun at its centre. All it holds is a single large planetoid and a surrounding area of empty space. A rival visiting there, or arriving with a set of demands to be fulfilled immediately, would be struck by the poverty of Tsyamoykyo's realm, which was of course the point. A modest city of workshops and factories appears to lie within the planetoid but it is just a façade. The only thing that matters within is the teleporter to the real fortress. Tsyamoykyo hated this place, as it was a reminder of how others viewed him and his need to maintain that image. He always planned to destroy it once the last of the useful materials was removed but hesitated just in case a decoy might eventually prove useful.

There is much to explore in the area around the pocket universe access point. Tsyamoykyo's expeditions conducted a survey long ago, which can be retrieved from the databases, but he chose to have minimal interactions with this region of space. The less he touched, the less signature would be available for others to find. This means that the Travellers have a whole region of space to explore and perhaps even colonise. There may be species entirely unknown within Charted Space, although there are no starfaring civilisations.

If the Travellers want, they can 'unpinch' the pocket universe and return its contents to the 'real' universe. Removing the region was a bit like cutting a circle out of a piece of cloth then somehow making the inner edges of the hole meet up. Returning the pocket universe would cause the surrounding systems to spring back to their previous locations. The sudden reappearance of several stars is a significant occurrence and now there is a black hole as well. The effects on the local region of space are likely to be long-term and quite significant, but it will be centuries before the change is noticed in Charted Space. In the meantime, the Travellers might have an interesting time figuring out how much they have just distorted the fabric of the universe and what the implications might be.

A search of the fortress will reveal teleportation chambers, always in heavily secured areas. A couple of these lead to dead or dying pocket universes, collapsed by Tsyamoykyo around their inhabitants. It is possible to walk on the surface of a planet slowly being consumed as the walls of the pocket universe collapse inward, or to visit a place where, inexplicably, everything has just… died. Other places are less depressing but not all that useful; storage universes waiting to be filled with useful items, tiny pocket universes used only for storing fuel for starships, and containment universes which presumably once held enemies or the results of strange experiments. A few of these teleporters come out on ships or installations positioned closer to Charted Space and provide a means for the Travellers to get home if they wish.

ASSETS AND REQUIREMENTS

Just figuring out what they have at their disposal will take the Travellers a very long time. Most of what they have inherited from Tsyamoykyo is badly damaged or buried inside collapsed areas of the fortress, presenting the Travellers with a lengthy extraction and repair challenge. On the other hand, even just what falls immediately to hand is a cornucopia of incredible capabilities. From here on, when the Travellers want to do something it is likely to be a matter of figuring out how rather than whether the task is possible or not. This can generate subsequent adventures for the Travellers. Whenever they want to carry out some new task they must present a plan to the Referee, who will decide if the equipment and resources are to hand or must be found or constructed. Often this will require the Travellers to make a foray out of their new fortress to find some missing component or seek knowledge. Adventures of this kind are likely to follow a basic format.

Decision: The Travellers decide what they want to do and present a plausible plan for how they will go about it.

Knowledge: The Referee decides what knowledge the Travellers require and whether they already have it. If not, the Referee determines how hard the information is to get and the Travellers decide where to look for it.

Materials: The Referee determines what equipment and materials will be required along with how much labour and time. Often this means the Travellers must go and get something or transport people and materials to the task site.

Special Considerations: Sometimes a different problem must be solved before the task at hand can begin or the Travellers must overcome several obstacles to unjam a bogged-down project. Each of these can spawn a new adventure or perhaps cause a project to be put on the back burner until circumstances are right.

Consequences: The Referee must determine what the consequences and outcome will be. Not all projects will play out the way the Travellers expect and in some cases there will be consequences. The Travellers may or may not care about these – they might, after all, be the sort to sacrifice millions to their own egos. Some consequences may be hidden or delayed, such as a rise in rebellious sentiment or the creation of a minor foe who gradually increases in power without the Travellers noticing.

Everything the Travellers decide to do can be subject to this process and the adventures it spawns. However, the Referee should not throw obstacles in the way for the sake of it. Let the Travellers experience what it is to have true power… at least some of the time. Occasionally, a really complex project will turn out to be very easy – 'oh, we have a quantum interferometer in the other lab, it'll give us a result in half an hour' – and on other occasions things will not go very well at all. The Travellers' endeavours should produce a mix of adventure, satisfaction and frustration, with some projects becoming personal bugbears that creep slowly forward only to find some new obstacle in the way.

Overall, the fortress should be treated as a source of equipment and machinery to facilitate whatever the Travellers want but they should have to work for it in terms of creativity, planning and the occasional risky mission outside the pocket universe. The available resources should make the Travellers want to undertake great tasks. If the Referee provides nearly enough to accomplish whatever the Travellers want, they will create an adventure for themselves by seeking out the rest. The key is to give them just enough to show what is possible if only they could obtain that one missing piece.

REVELATIONS

The Travellers have learned and witnessed much but will always need more knowledge. Some problems can be solved by brooding in a tower for a year or two using the Ponder ability but often this will indicate what knowledge is missing rather than the final solution. On other occasions the Travellers may simply be curious about something.

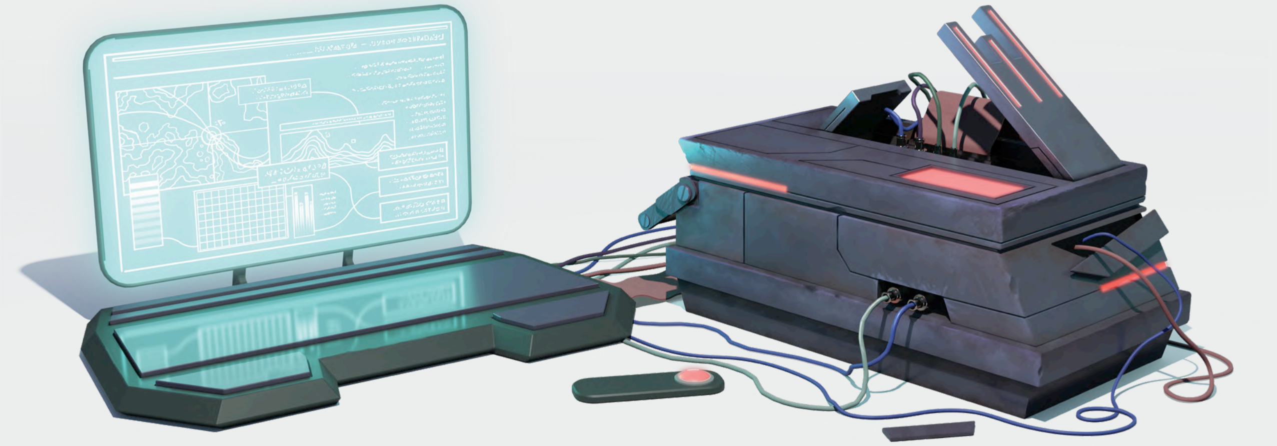
There are multiple ways to seek knowledge in the fortress. Much is stored in the electronic memories of computers scattered throughout the installation. These may be psionically operated but a database is a database. However, these compilations of knowledge are made up of dry facts and there are secrets too precious to entrust to a machine. The Travellers will be able to access a wealth of scientific knowledge from these databases to facilitate their work but if they want wisdom and insight they must look elsewhere.

Essentially, the databases contain anything an advanced (say, TL15–17) society could learn through experimentation and observation. These facts are useful for reference but meaningless to those who do not understand how they fit together. It is one thing to read the formal presentation of a temporal interface theorem and quite another to know how it applies to third-order macrocosmic gravitational interactions. The Travellers can make reference to these sources but to use them they must study and experiment.

Deeper secrets are not entrusted to the computers but stored either in psionic artworks or the memories of living Drones. Secret knowledge is distributed among the minds of many Drones, in fragmentary form, with multiple backups of each informational fragment. Piecing together all the relevant information will be quite a detective job for the Travellers the first couple of times but after a while they will develop an intuitive understanding of the data storage system. This supposes a sufficient number of Drones are still alive to retain all the knowledge the Travellers need. If not, they may have to embark on an adventure to find the missing pieces.

Psionic artworks and memories of Drones do not contain just hard data. Through the transferred or triggered memories it is possible to experience using the information or conducting the experiment. Travellers will be able to teach themselves processes – both physical and mental – useful in carrying out research or finishing tasks they have set themselves. Indeed, learning how to think like and 'be' one of the Ancients is a task the Travellers might embark upon. It will be difficult and time-consuming at first but the effort will be repaid in terms of smoother future tasks and perhaps unexpected information.

If the Travellers choose to put in some time on experimentation and knowledge-seeking, they can learn more about the uplift process they are experiencing. This is no small task and the Travellers will need to outline a research project which will create one or more adventures. Once complete, the task will result in new revelations about the process, increasing their maximum RI threshold by another +100 points. No more major insight is available from data at the fortress – the next revelation will have to be found somewhere else. Finding it is one of the things the Travellers may choose to do after they have completed this campaign. Who knows where that quest will take them?



BEYOND THE ANCIENTS

The Travellers have killed an Ancient and taken control of his fortress. All its wonders are now at their disposal. The question is… what now? How the Travellers answer that question will have repercussions for all of Charted Space. The Referee must also consider what follows these epic events. It might be fun to go back to 'ordinary' adventuring, only with superpowers, but there is not much challenge to be had any more from a bank heist or chasing down an obscure book.

The first question for the Referee is whether to continue playing with these Travellers. Slaying the last of the Ancients would be a suitable finale for a campaign, after which the Referee might prefer a full reboot with new Travellers. Alternatively, play can begin with new Travellers, with these remaining in the background. The new Travellers might occasionally see the hand of their former selves at work, or the Referee and the Travellers could jointly decide what happens next – in this case the Travellers have earned themselves a place as worldbuilders for the campaign. Not all groups can handle this, however.

The simple answer, then, is to stop. The Travellers have won. They have taken on the greatest beings ever to strut the cosmic stage and cast them down. Perhaps it is time for something less grandiose… but what if it is not? What next for the slayers of gods? There is much for them to do if they put their minds to it but their perspective needs to change. A campaign where the victorious Travellers entertain themselves by blasting through 'ordinary' adventures will soon become boring. Big heroes need big stories.

The problem the Referee faces is campaign bloat on a scale never seen before in *Traveller*. Having cast down the Ancients the Travellers need new foes but what threat could possibly emerge to eclipse what they have already faced? The Referee can come up with something of course but what then? Another gigantic threat? There comes a point where this becomes silly… and there is another problem. If the Travellers triumph against gigantic odds only to face a new threat that makes them look like newly created Travellers once again, what have they really achieved? For the Travellers' victory to be meaningful it must have lasting significance – and this is the key to continuing the campaign after Tsyamoykyo is defeated.

The Travellers have gained great power and now must decide what to do with it. They have moved to a bigger stage and have the potential to create their own adventures. That is perhaps a greater triumph than overthrowing the Ancients; the opportunity to experience the universe as they did. Some of the projects that might pique the Travellers' interest are discussed here but the Referee should keep in mind that the Travellers are now in a position to do whatever they want. From this point on, they are at the helm.

KILLING ALL THE GODS

The Travellers might decide they do not want competition, or that the universe is better off without the Ancients. Tsyamoykyo has devices in his lair set up to collapse pocket universes or trigger catastrophic events in them. If the Referee chooses, these could be available for all the remaining Ancients, allowing the Travellers to kill all the gods in a single dramatic gesture. This is a suitably epic ending for the campaign but the Referee might instead have instakill options available only for some. Others will have to be tracked down and destroyed or imprisoned. This will spawn new adventures pitched at a suitably high power level without resorting to a 'new and previously unsuspected super-gigantic threat of the week' style of play. The Travellers may end up experiencing their own version of the Ancients' Final War, quite possibly wrecking Charted Space all over again. Ultimately this option is about the Travellers deciding if they want the Ancients to be a continuing part of the campaign universe.

RESURRECTING THE GODS

The Travellers might go the other way and decide the universe has room for multiple superbeings. They might want to learn from Yaskoydray or to be directed by him. Even if Yaskoydray was killed in *Secrets of the Ancients*, the Travellers may be able to bring him back. The genetic cache survivors could be cloned, perhaps altered through several generations, to create a new body for Yaskoydray. An archive may have survived somewhere with part or even all of his personality and knowledge preserved. If so, the Travellers can rebuild Grandfather if they want. They might also create new superbeings, or bodies to transfer themselves to.

There are multiple ways the Referee can use this concept. Loyal servitors might manage to bring Yaskoydray back without the Travellers' involvement. This could be useful if the Referee wants him to be in the universe for any reason and might create a new antagonist for the Travellers. Another option is to have only part of Yaskoydray come back, or for him to come back somehow… wrong. A weak or damaged Yaskoydray would be an interesting character, perhaps warning the Travellers about something he feared or revealing great secrets in return for accomplishing tasks. The same applies if Yaskoydray survived *Secrets of the Ancients*. He may completely ignore the Travellers or begin working to eliminate the threat they pose. Alternatively, Yaskoydray might become their mentor and guide. Perhaps that is what he wanted all along – his clone-children were a disappointment but their actions eventually led to the emergence of independent super-beings. Yaskoydray might see them as a threat, or proteges, or perhaps even companions and peers.

TAKING OVER

It may be that the Travellers need a powerbase to complete their next objectives, or they might just like the idea of controlling everything. A whole campaign can be built around their efforts to build an empire, whether overt or in the shadows. The Travellers' motivations will determine how grim this can get; they might end up being tyrants of a sort never seen before, or perhaps they will dedicate themselves to making things better for everyone. Whatever they do, there will be opposition.

If the Travellers start ostentatiously smashing up cities or disintegrating planets they will face an escalating response from the people of Charted Space. The Travellers may be able to swat whatever is sent against them but scared people are inventive. They will face insurrections, sabotage, infiltration, undermining of their power… everything they might have done if the situation were reversed. Perhaps a plucky band of Travellers might assault one of their war machines in a strangely familiar fashion and perhaps the Travellers will find themselves wondering when they became the bad guys.

A more subtle approach will allow the Travellers to insinuate themselves in local power structures or gain control of critical resources. They may end up ruling through a series of agents, perhaps even pitting the great powers of Charted Space against one another to create the circumstances the Travellers need. Perhaps the Fifth (or Sixth…) Frontier War will be fought at the Travellers' behest or even between powers controlled by rival Travellers.

Even if the Travellers are benign there will be bloodshed. The current wielders of power will not want to be edged out or crushed and will fight back as best they can. This means that the Travellers or their servitors will come under attack from good-hearted and loyal Imperial personnel or Droyne whose only wish is to serve their Oytrip well. The Travellers may or may not care that they are killing decent people in order to further their goals. How they react to this will show their true nature.

MAKING THINGS BETTER

The Travellers might set out to make things better for everyone. They have the capability to end hunger and put a stop to injustice if they apply their resources well, but what a huge undertaking that would be! The Travellers must also contend with the question of whose definition of 'better' they want to use. There are so many different cultures in Charted Space and not all have the same values. As the Travellers have seen, Droyne need their rigid caste structure to function. Would somehow creating a society in which all Droyne were free be even possible? Would they be happier? One sophont's freedom is another's nightmare, it seems. The same can be said for all other social values.

This approach, however benign, means playing god. The Travellers would have to change societies and 'educate' their members. Resistance is inevitable. The Travellers might find themselves in the role of vengeful gods, smiting mortals for their own good. Some definitions of 'better' will result in far more destruction than others. For example, the Travellers might promote conflict or impose disasters so that the strongest and most adaptable will emerge. This might be good for the people of Charted Space in the longer term but at the time it will be nothing more than needless suffering.

It may be that well-meaning Travellers who genuinely want to make things better pose the greatest threat to the people of Charted Space, especially if they try to do too much, too fast. It is possible to be a force for good but that requires patience and a great deal of wisdom. The Travellers would have to learn about many cultures and figure out how they all fit together, perhaps creating a loose framework for cooperation rather than trying to impose a perfect society on everyone. There are enough resources for everyone to have plenty but apportioning them fairly is not easy. For example, the Travellers might decide to promote fair trade in order to ensure everyone has enough of everything. This seems like a simple enough idea but it will face opposition from those who want to become wealthy by hoarding resources or restricting supply in order to push up prices.

If the Travellers want to go down this road, they have an incentive to visit places and study the people who live there. It is entirely possible that having drawn great strokes upon the canvas of history the Travellers then devote years to the tiny details. To do good without causing harm will require an understanding of the people of Charted Space that will not come quickly – it is relatively easy to ram a set of rules down everyone's throats by force but wise governance is far more complex.

PLAYING FAVOURITES

Instead of trying to make everything better for everyone the Travellers might pick one species, or one polity, to elevate to true greatness. This could start with an existing power or be a new species just emerging to sentience. They might even uplift a chosen species. Doing something like this means playing around with the destiny of all species in the galaxy, perhaps with unexpected results. That might be what the Travellers want; an experiment on a gigantic scale. As an alternative, they might each choose a species to nurture and see which emerges as dominant. They would be turning the fate of Charted Space into a game but there are gods who do that sort of thing.

The Travellers' motives might well be altruistic – perhaps they intend to create a tolerant, fair and peaceful multi-species state as a showcase of what can be achieved through enlightened cooperation. Such a state might attract new members willing to embrace its ethos in return for security and prosperity, and gradually spread to encompass a huge area. It could be one of the greatest achievements of all time. Yet such an endeavour can go horribly awry. Peaceful prosperity translates to 'easy target' for some and before long the Travellers might be defending their showcase state against the surrounding barbarians… or violently suppressing the 'barbarians' so their enlightened utopia can flourish.

GRAND PROJECTS

The Travellers might decide to build wonders or learn the secrets of the universe. Almost any grand project will be the stuff of adventures; collecting materials or searching for knowledge will take the Travellers to far-off places. It is unlikely the Travellers will be able to complete these projects on their own and even if they try they will surely tire of doing all the manual work themselves. The answer is of course to create groups of servitors, as the Ancients did. The Travellers might decide to take the simplest path – forcing servitude through fear or withholding something the servitors need until they comply. If the Travellers are more benign they might win over a population who are only too glad to help.

The Grand Projects concept overlaps with Taking Over in many cases. Whether the Travellers seek dominance in order to have help with their projects, or indulge themselves with great projects to show how dominant they are, the end result is much the same. It is possible that they will not really notice they are becoming tyrants, especially if they develop the sort of ego that goes with god-like powers.

DISTANT VOYAGES

There is a lot of universe out there and the Travellers have a chance to see more of it than most people ever will. Some destinations suggest themselves; the galactic core or the tip of the spiral arm are obvious choices. Any prominent astrographic feature is a potential target – black holes, unusual radio sources, isolated systems in deep rifts. The Travellers might find out about other interesting places from the ruins of Ancients installations. Perhaps there is a record of where Yaskoydray voyaged, or where he sent his minions? The instruments now available to the Travellers may be able to find signals and anomalies that were previously undetectable.

The Travellers might also just wander. Most of the star systems out there are just rockballs and gas giants but there are many that are far more interesting. Space-going creatures exist and natural wonders. The Travellers might find and preserve the works of species that never quite made it onto the cosmic stage, befriending the last survivors or at least ensuring they live on in records. One option is to follow Ancient expeditions such as the one that preceded the far more recent *Deepnight Revelation* mission. This would perhaps be enlightening and might force the Travellers to confront the Deepnight Entity. They might even find a way to rescue *Deepnight Revelation* herself from wherever she ends up.

LEGACY OF THE ANCIENTS

Was there some great threat that required unity among Yaskoydray's offspring to counter? Did Yaskoydray lose interest in the wider universe or did he hide from some coming cataclysm? If such a nemesis exists then the Travellers may have to put together a response. Before that, and whether or not the threat is real, they will need to gather information and resources. The same applies in a more general sense if the Travellers want to make use of the surviving Ancients' resources.

There are remnants of the Ancients scattered all across Charted Space and beyond – and also in hidden pocket universes. Some of those might be death-traps, whether deliberately or as a result of machinery running wild. With the last of the Ancients gone, some of these areas might become dangerous on their own or be triggered by inquisitive people. The Travellers might need to make these sites safe for the good of everyone, or they might just want to plunder them. Former servitors of the Ancients may now attempt to take control of Charted Space, triggering a campaign by the Travellers to suppress them – or perhaps recruit them.

There are many adventures to be had exploring the legacy of the Ancients and not just in physical terms. The Travellers are uniquely positioned to find out everything the Ancients did and why. They might also discover what the Ancients failed to do, which could lead to new adventures or grand endeavours. One of the goals that will surely fascinate the Travellers is immortality. Yaskoydray learned how to overcome mortality; perhaps the Travellers can find a different or better way? If they can achieve this they will have time for everything else they could ever want to do.

REDEMPTION

Nothing is simple and the actions of the Travellers will have unexpected consequences. Even if they do not go through a phase of self-indulgence and rampant egotism there will inevitably be mistakes and unintended outcomes. The Travellers are sufficiently powerful that their actions can destroy ecosystems, cause societies to collapse and perhaps turn loose new extinction-level threats. Frustration at the difficulty of doing good might make the Travellers selfish and intolerant, or just downright vindictive. In short, whether they mean to or not the Travellers are likely to cause a great deal of suffering.

Even if they use their powers in a childish and nasty way at some point, the Travellers always have the potential to seek redemption. This might go in cycles, as the Travellers try to fix a mistake but once again become frustrated and hurl their galaxy-sized toys out of the metaphorical pram. The cycle of rage and redemption could continue indefinitely but it is likely the Travellers will eventually settle into either a 'good' or 'bad' persona, or else hide away and leave Charted Space to its own devices. Perhaps that is why Yaskoydray retreated to his pocket universe – for all his great powers he was unable to achieve complete perfection, and people suffered every time he tried.

ALL OF THE ABOVE AND EVERYTHING ELSE

The Travellers can do anything they want now. They get to decide the truths of their *Traveller* universe. Ever since the history-dream they have been involved in the worldbuilding process and they can now act directly. Their universe might diverge from the one used by writers of 'canon' materials but canon exists only as a baseline to work from; a set of common assumptions that allow a writer to create materials accessible to everyone. As soon as a *Traveller* campaign begins it belongs to the Referee and the Travellers; their version of reality is the canon of *that* universe.

This means that nothing is off-limits. The Travellers have already had the chance to decide if the Ancients are still around and if Yaskoydray in particular still exists. If they want to find a way to enter the supermassive black hole at Sagittarius A*, the centre of the galaxy, then this will generate adventures as they gather knowledge and materials followed by an epic finale as they enter a totally unknown realm. They might go in a totally different direction, exploring metaphysics or philosophy. They may find themselves mired in the constant struggle to help mere mortals overcome their – relatively – petty problems.

Anything can happen now. At some point the Travellers might be building parsec-high statues of themselves and at another constructing a machine to bust open the heavens so they can have a stern word with the gods. They might end up bringing Yaskoydray back from the dead in the hope he can absolve them of some terrible mistake or show them how to fix it. They may encounter a terrible threat or go off on a centuries-long sightseeing tour. They may build a cottage and grow vegetables, turning their backs on the complexities of godhood. Only one thing is certain – the Travellers are now captains of their own fate. That, more than any riches or palace full of amazing devices, is the payoff for their hard work and heroic actions.

LIBRARY DATA

The following data is, for the most part, generally available from any library programme. Some entries may have local variations or be unavailable in some places for various reasons. The data presented here is what is available. That does not necessarily make it complete or even true. The Travellers should note that Imperial authorities have the ability to censor the datanets.

ANDOR

Andor is a Droyne world, with no permanent inhabitants of any other species. It is widely considered the primary candidate for the lost homeworld of the Droyne. Andor is a primarily agricultural world, with virtually no imports or exports. The population are organised into a single planetary state, or Oytrip, which possesses a mature TL9 industrial base. Droyne ships from other Oytripin routinely visit the world and local vessels come and go. No other access is permitted.

Soon after the world's discovery in 802 it was placed under interdiction by the Imperial authorities. No reason is given to public requests for information on the Red Zone but is thought to be connected with major security issues. A powerful interdiction flotilla, with a capital ship as its centrepiece, is stationed in orbit. The presence of a battleship or dreadnought on such a deployment is highly unusual and response to attempts to slip through the blockade is always robust. Since Andor is permitted contact with other Droyne, the blockade must be intended to keep non-Droyne out rather than containing the people of Andor. What is not clear is whether this is to protect the Droyne or everyone else.

BRAUDEL

Braudel is a remote world in the Egryn subsector of the Trojan Reach. It is habitable, if rather dry, with a thin tainted atmosphere. The world is Red Zoned to protect the tiny human population which is thought to number less than 1,000 individuals. The nearest Imperial world is Berengaria, seven parsecs away. There are no star systems less than three parsecs from Braudel and these are low-traffic backwaters.

FIRST RESORT

A mercenary unit active in the trailing side of the Spinward Marches, First Resort describes itself as a battalion-sized force but in practice never fields anything larger than a company. At any given time most of its personnel are scattered over several worlds in small groups, typically operating more as armed security or enforcers than military units. First Resort is a rather amateurish outfit with lax standards of discipline and service, as well as a reputation for looting and thievery. Its main selling points are cheapness and a willingness to carry out unsavoury tasks.

GARNETTE

Garnette is a modified scout/courier operating mostly in the Spinward Marches. The vessel is known to have been decommissioned by the Scout Service and privately refitted. She has passed through several hands, gaining value by way of her reputation. *Garnette* is considered to be something of a status symbol among the Ancients Hunter community and several notable figures have offered more than her worth to obtain her.

MAD CAPTAIN MADDOX

Captain Maddox is one of those figures about whom a great many tales are told but which lack critical details. Listeners are often too focused on the amazing things that happened to notice that there is no information on Maddox herself. Nobody seems to know who she really was or where she came from. The tales tell how she bought and refurbished an Imperial Navy carrier along with multiple smaller ships, then set out on an exploration cruise searching for… something or other. Most tales concern attempts to find or penetrate Ancients bases but Maddox is credited with many other exploits besides.

OMICRON DIVISION

The term 'Omicron Division' appears in a variety of conspiracy theories and diatribes posted by fringe datanet personalities. There is no evidence any such organisation exists.

RESEARCH STATION GAMMA

An Imperial research facility located on Vanejen in the Rhylanor subsector. Research Station Gamma was constructed beginning in 1075 to replace the previous, decommissioned, installation of the same name. It is officially listed as conducting research into 'life extension' but all other data is classified. The site is an Imperial Secure Zone, off-limits to unauthorised personnel.

RUSTIC IDYLL

Rustic Idyll, flagship of Captain Maddox' flotilla, was formerly the Imperial Navy strike carrier *Akhama*. Withdrawn from service in 1006 after receiving heavy damage during the Solomani Rim War, *Akhama* was redirected en route for disposal and given an interim refit at Harmony in the Daibei sector. She was transferred coreward and entered an unknown shipyard from which she emerged heavily modified as *Rustic Idyll*. The vessel was posted missing, presumed lost, in 1019.

SPINWARD MAIN

The Spinward Main is a chain of some 236 star systems which can be accessed by a jump-1 ship. The Main meanders through most of the Spinward Marches, largely but not entirely in Imperial space. There are several branches. The Louzy system, in the Jewell subsector, is considered by many to be the coreward tip of the Spinward Main, with Efate as its port-of-terminus. One major branch terminates at Sansibar, in Querion. Another extends into Rhylanor and loops back up into the Regina subsector. The 'Main-Main' runs rimward though Lanth and Lunion, with a branch going trailingward to Mora and Star Lane. The latter is in Deneb and is a common 'gateway to the Marches'. This branch also gives access to part of Rhylanor. The 'Lower Main' links Glisten and Lunion by way of neutral space in District 268, with an arm terminating at Wonstar in the Five Sisters. Meanwhile the 'Bowman Arm' extends spinward into Foreven and the Darrian Branch gives access to the Darrian Confederation by way of the Sword Worlds Confederation.

TWILIGHT'S PEAK

Twilight's Peak is the title of a novel written in epic poem style, supposedly telling the tale of an ill-fated convoy during the Third Frontier War. Many within the Ancients Hunter community are convinced it is true and spurious interpretations continue to surface on the datanets.

HIDDEN DATA

The following information is for the use of the Referee, although the Travellers may be able to get access to some or all of it. Some details may be garbled or entirely false, especially if the Travellers rely on publicly available sources or unreliable people such as certain members of the Ancients Hunter community. As a rule, the harder the Travellers work for their information the more complete and accurate it should be.

RESEARCH STATION GAMMA

The Third Imperium has a number of official research installations, which are given Greek letters as designation. The locations of these are normally acknowledged along with their field of research, although it is widely assumed that the stations have additional projects or may be a front for something unpalatable. It is not uncommon for protests to be organised at or involving official research stations, or for inquisitive individuals to attempt to penetrate the installation.

Research Station Gamma, located on Vanejen, is officially listed as involved in research into a range of species found in the Spinward Marches. It produces a slow but steady stream of academic papers detailing the behaviour and characteristics of various species. This information is accepted by the scientific community and fits with existing knowledge, so it is safe to assume it is the result of dull but rigorous scientific research. The occasional 'briefly fascinating' piece of information comes out of Research Station Gamma but for the most part the installation is well established as being of little interest to the average person.

Gamma is located in a remote area of a mid-tech world. Unofficial craft are never granted permission to land there, so the only access for unauthorised 'visitors' is by way of a long maritime transit from the world's civilian starport. This is more trouble than the typical investigative journalist or band of protestors are willing to go to, so the installation receives little attention. An attempt to penetrate it in late 1102, by activists posing as the crew of a distressed free trader, resulted in a high-profile trial and stiff sentences for the intruders. Other than this, Gamma is rarely in the mainstream news.

Referee: Those who dig elsewhere can turn up a few additional facts. Those with connections to the naval or governmental community will find it is an open secret that the station is involved in psionics-related projects but that in recent years access has become ever more difficult. There was a time, perhaps 15 years ago, when the installation was receiving funding for all manner of black-sky projects and long-shot research. At that time naval ships carrying intelligence officers were frequent visitors. In recent years this has dwindled, to the point where only a handful of vessels ever visit. Funding levels have actually increased but the installation seems to have changed its focus. It is also rumoured that the 'intelligence officers' who do visit these days are more likely to be officials from Omicron Division.

The Travellers may already know there is a connection between Research Station Gamma and Omicron Division. The installation was at one point researching G482 specimens that had been found but these were moved to a spin-off project code-named Gannessa. This is ostensibly a commercial research group conducting 'contract research of a sensitive nature' for Imperial authorities. Numerous such projects exist, normally run by private concerns to undertake research on behalf of a client. Most specialise, and many end up on contract to world governments or elements of the Imperial administration, but some will take on multiple small projects from various private clients and conduct them in the strictest confidence. Gannessa is officially one of those but in reality is engaged in what can only be termed 'psionic warfighting' research.

Travellers who can get deep into the sector's administrative apparatus – either by way of computer system intrusion or by finding an informant – will discover there are deep concerns about the ethics of what is happening at Gamma. Numerous personnel urgently requested reassignment and there is little indication they have been replaced. However, Gamma seems to be producing some kind of results and someone is pleased enough with them to keep the installation operating.

RESEARCH PROJECTS AT GAMMA

The official remit of Research Station Gamma is research into various life forms found in the Spinward Marches, with a view to developing new medical treatments and anti-aging processes. Those with sufficient clearance will be aware that this is a real activity but also a cover for research into psionics, notably connected with the Chirpers who are native to – or at least have a large native population on – Vanejen. Chirpers are thought to possess basic telepathic or telempathic abilities and possibly some exotic powers.

These are just the outer layers of the onion, however. A deeper aim of the station is to increase understanding of psionics, notably telepathy, with a view to developing interstellar telepathic communications. This is considered sufficiently important that irregularities are swept under the carpet so long as the project remains promising. Over time, the researchers involved in this project, and notably the acting director, have cut corners and engaged in highly unethical practices in the name of science. Matters have reached the stage where success is a matter of survival; if the project is closed down the acting director will no longer be protected. His experiments crossed the line into being totally illegal some years ago and he knows he will be severely punished if he fails or is removed from office.

As a result, Acting Director Vicervis feels increasingly pressured and justified in taking ever greater risks, and anyone who fails to support him will feel his wrath. Some of his subordinates have implicated themselves and now have little choice but to go along with the project, which is becoming increasingly esoteric and dark. Omicron Division is interested in Vicervis' works and quite happy to facilitate it, so when he began wanting larger numbers of test subjects they obliged. In some cases Omicron Division supplied the subjects directly, such as a number of G482 creatures and the Andorian Droyne but they have also arranged deniable assets in the form of low-end mercenaries to grab Chirpers and other subjects for research purposes.

The G482 creature was briefly studied at Gamma but once it became apparent that its abilities were not connected with the main field of research – and were more suited to specialised applications that Omicron Division wanted to investigate directly – the specimens were removed and a new project set up elsewhere. Currently Vicervis is obsessed with the idea that Chirpers have some kind of interstellar communication ability, which would account for similarities between planetary populations that cannot possibly ever have met.

MERCEDES' STORY

When the Travellers last saw Mercedes Karamaka she was bugging out of her current hiding-place ahead of an assault by mercenaries serving Omicron Division. Now she seems to be working with Omicron. How this came to be is surprisingly straightforward. Mercedes has lived a long life and collected information. Ever since her experience at Twilight's Peak all those years ago she has made a career out of researching the Ancients and observing others who do the same – or claim to.

Mercedes has always operated discreetly and rarely maintains an identity or a locality for more than a decade or so. She has a few contacts in the Ancients Hunter community but generally avoids the majority of its members as she considers them useless at best and in most cases extremely annoying. Mercedes does not study so that she can reveal great secrets and enjoy the adulation of the masses; she does it because she is fascinated and frightened by the Ancients. The Ancients Hunter community has one use as far as Mercedes is concerned; she watches it like the surface of a pond. Most ripples are of no interest but occasionally there will be a big splash.

Something happened recently; something big. Mercedes does not know what it was but she observed the shockwaves that went through the Ancients Hunter community and also the actions of Imperial agencies such as Omicron Division. Several of the more credible Ancients Hunters have disappeared or departed on sudden journeys, including some Mercedes knows to be retired. This was a reaction to the clash between Seven and Grandfather, which occurred at the climax of *Secrets of the Ancients*.

Mercedes would normally have spent some time re-establishing herself somewhere new but with so much happening she decided she needed to act immediately. She was aware that Omicron Division had transferred most of its starships out of the sector but did not know why. As she searched for information she came to the conclusion that Charted Space was facing an 'unconventional threat' – the sort of thing Omicron Division was created to deal with. Whilst she does not approve of its methods, Mercedes acknowledges that Omicron Division serves a useful purpose. As she learned more it became obvious that cooperation was vital.

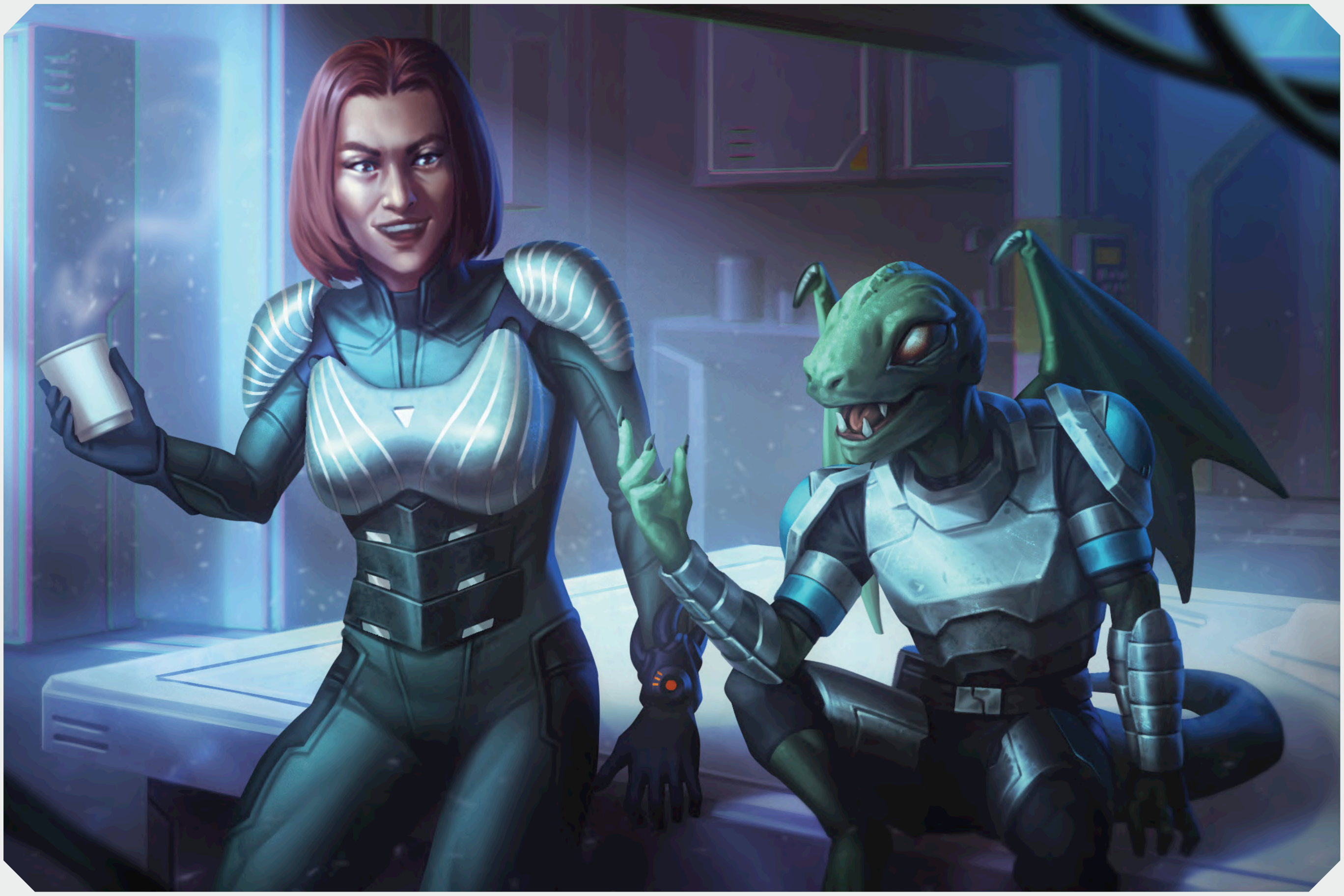
After an awkward meeting and exchange of information Mercedes was accepted as an associate of Omicron Division, working 'with-not-for' – she is adamant on that point – assets remaining in the Spinward Marches. Ironically perhaps, one topic of great interest to herself and her new allies was the Travellers. She has been collecting information on their movements and correlating it with events elsewhere. She has shared this information with Omicron Division but not all of it.

Mercedes is openly working with Omicron Division – insofar as either does anything openly – but the relationship is tricky and lacking in trust. Under other circumstances neither would even consider such an arrangement and if Mercedes' true past leaked out she would become more valuable as a prisoner for interrogation than a field agent. However, for now the arrangement is bearing fruit. She was asked to come to Gamma to help figure out what is so important about that one particular population of Droyne. The situation is not at all what she was expecting and so far she has had little information from Vicervis. The arrival of the Travellers is an additional wild card, prompting Mercedes to consider more direct action.

MERCEDES' STORY – PART 2

That is what happened to Mercedes up to the point where the Travellers met her at Research Station Gamma. After leaving she was contacted by a Droyne Sport who seemed to know all about her and who was keen for her to go to his Oytrip. That was a voyage of many months but could be cut short by the use of a teleportation device. If Mercedes had the Droyne from Andor with her, they were taken care of and are now en route to Andor – they may have arrived by now. She went through the teleporter.

Interstellar teleportation is, it appears, entirely possible. This has incredible implications for communications and therefore strategy, politics and economics. There are, however, some problems. The process is extremely painful and places great stress on a person's body. Mercedes was incapacitated for days after her transit and weak for some time after that. However, she arrived safely enough aboard a Droyne ship whose Leader seemed to know who she was.



It seems that the Oytrip of Vaykouh had been interested in her ever since her escapade at Twilight's Peak and had kept in contact through a series of Droyne friends. She had long been considered a potential ally by the Oytrip and as the Travellers already know they sent the Sport Irthoyl to her when the Oytrip came under attack. The Travellers were also flagged as potential allies once they proved willing to fight minions of Tsyamoykyo.

Upon her arrival, Mercedes was briefed on the situation and has been trying to formulate a plan to strike back at the conquerors of Vaykouh. With so little to work with she has so far drawn a blank but now the Travellers have arrived there might be a way. Mercedes knows the Droyne of Vaykouh will not follow an outsider but some of their more desperate Leaders are willing to be advised by one.

IRTHOYL'S STORY

Irthoyl was a Sport in the service of Ordssess, one of the great Leaders-of-Leaders of the Oytrip of Vaykouh. He was important and trusted, since he acted as Ordssess' ambassador and sometimes spoke to outsiders on behalf of the whole Oytrip. Theirs was an unusual community, in that their Leaders realised long ago that the Ancients would use them as servitors if they ever returned and that this was undesirable. Their solution was to move to an entirely different planet and hide, creating a society so ecologically friendly that the world would seem uninhabited. For centuries they were successful in concealing themselves but they kept watch for signs the Ancients might again be stirring. The occasional foray was made to thwart agents of the Ancients but until the recent incident on Lydia the Oytrip kept its operation low-key.

The Oytrip's Leaders knew of the installation under Twilight's Peak on Lydia and were concerned when Mercedes and her crew found their way in. They watched and everything seemed to go back to normal. They also decided that each of the surviving adventurers who had found the place would be befriended. Irthoyl is not the first Droyne friend Mercedes had; that was Ayox. Ayox was lost many years ago, his fate never revealed. It is known that he also befriended 'Mad' Captain Maddox and was aboard her ship *Rustic Idyll* when it was lost. Other friends followed but of them all Irthoyl was the dearest.

When he came to Mercedes, he was already half-insane with loss. The Oytrip's Leaders learned that the Ancient Tsyamoykyo was once again active and had sent agents to claim the Lydia installation. This could not be permitted, so they sent a ship armed with a planetbuster device. The mission was successful, almost annihilating the Travellers along with the mountain but it set in motion the destruction of the Oytrip. Now they had revealed their existence, the Leaders deemed it necessary to oppose Tsyamoykyo's fleet in battle. They were able to eliminate enough of his support ships that he called off his planned operation but in so doing the Oytrip drew his wrath.

The Oytrip of Vaykouh came under intense attack with unimaginably powerful weapons. Its defences were strong but it fell in hours. Even then, the assault continued. Hordes of ground combatants poured into those population centres not blasted from orbit and a great war machine was built on the surface. The pace of the destruction slowed, becoming more deliberate and more intimate. Tsyamoykyo had already won but he insisted on slowly crushing every possible iota of resistance – and doing it slowly to give others time to fear their fate. Tsyamoykyo installed a puppet ruler over what little remained and returned to his lair to ready a new campaign.

Irthoyl was sent away during the fighting, to warn any who would listen that Tsyamoykyo was coming to conquer them. The destruction of his home and, more importantly, his people, had all but unhinged him by the time he reached Mercedes. She suspects there is something more to his story, but he would not speak of it. Having told his story he asked of Mercedes a great favour – to stay with him as he underwent the meditative process of Krinaytsyu. Although it was hard for her, Mercedes ensured her friend was not alone when he died. She knew it was what he wanted; freedom from the grief and feeling of uselessness that came with the loss of the Oytrip.

What Irthoyl did not tell Mercedes was the most shattering blow of all. His Leader Ordssess did not fall in the fighting. He was captured and brought before Tsyamoykyo. When he returned he was different; a traitor to his Oytrip and his kind. Ordssess is the puppet Leader of the Oytrip of Vaykouh now and that was too much for Irthoyl to bear or speak of.

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